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Nichols, Harry Peirce, 1850-
1940.

The temporary and the
permanent in New Testament

THE BOHLEN LECTURES FOR 1905.

APR 29

The Temporary and the Permanent in New Testament Revelation

BY

HARRY PEIRCE NICHOLS, D.D.

RECTOR HOLY TRINITY CHURCH, NEW YORK

NEW YORK

THOMAS WHITTAKER

2 and 3 Bible House

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PRINTERS NEW YORK

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“In case either of said offices are vacant, the others may nominate the lecturer.”

Under this trust the Reverend H. P. NICHOLS, D. D. of New York, N. Y. was appointed to deliver the lectures for the year 1905.

CONTENTS.

LECTURE I.

THE TEMPORARY AND THE PERMANENT INHERENT IN REVELATION.

	PAGE
I. The suspected positions of one age become the accepted commonplaces of another	1
The temporary and permanent to be separated on recognized principles ; the results to be appropriated as of foremost value for a rea- sonable Christianity	4
II. The title may offend on first hearing. The principle involved has long been conceded	5
III. The keynote of the separation of temporary and permanent is Translation	8
Duty to translate whatever is to be kept alive.	9
Translation to be applied to New Testament as to all other possessions of value	13
The individual makes his own by translation	14
IV. Universality another keynote of separation of temporary and permanent	15
Universality of the Gospel our boast	16
What is of universal value learned by discrimina- tion.	16

	PAGE
The universal discovered by degrees	18
Creed and Liturgy constantly throwing off temporary	24
V. The principle of Separation has been already admitted	27
In New Testament times	28
In the history of the Church	30
VI. Outline of the course of lectures	32

LECTURE II.

THE TEMPORARY AND THE PERMANENT IN A WRITTEN REVELATION.

I. Christianity the Religion of a Book	34
The Church existed before the Book ; and a Revelation requires one to receive it	34
Yet the Book is the standard and witness of Christianity	35
The Book is Christianity's characteristic and glory	37
II. The Book demands separation of temporary from permanent	40
Written in time : its contents to be determined ; to be interpreted	40
The Canon illustrates this separation	43
The forming of the Canon a historical process	44
Study of its method confirms our faith in its value	47

	PAGE
III. Inspiration of less moment than canonicity	51
Inspiration does not extend to individual style	53
Does not belong to all Scripture alike. The liturgical use of the Bible may select and omit the temporary	55
IV. The separation of temporary and permanent applies to interpretation of the Book	60
Every sacred book has a partly earthly, partly heavenly parentage	62
Use of Old Testament by New Testament writers, notably Christ	65
A less fragmentary view of the Scriptures is growing	69
V. What remains of God's Word for God's people	70

LECTURE III.

THE TEMPORARY AND THE PERMANENT IN THE INCARNATION.

The Man is behind the Book.

I. The Incarnation is the concentrating fact of thought and hope	76
The Incarnation involves race, family, place, time, education, opportunity	77
The union of the divine and human is the glory and the difficulty of the Incarnation	78
The Christ of History and of Experience must eliminate temporary factors	80
The divine Christ emerges	86

	PAGE
II. These considerations have a theological and a practical bearing.	
1. Theological	88
(1) The incarnate Christ laid aside metaphysical attributes	89
(2) Christ's knowledge limited in the Incarnation	92
(3) The moral attributes undiminished in the Incarnation	98
The virgin birth	102
2. Practical,	
(1) Our only satisfying knowledge of God through Christ	104
Anthropomorphism	106
(2) Imitation of God possible only through the Incarnation	108
Following Christ	110
III. Our natural approach to God by the human Christ	114

LECTURE IV.

THE TEMPORARY AND THE PERMANENT IN CHRIST'S TEACHING.

I. Christ's teaching a prominent factor of the Incarnation	117
Yet His Person first	117
Christ's teaching involves inevitable temporary elements	119
Singularly free from the temporary	120

	PAGE
II. General considerations on temporary and permanent aspects of Christ's teaching.	
1. Christ's teaching had an intelligible meaning for His immediate hearers	123
2. Christ uses the language of accommodation.	128
Possession by demons	130
Critical questions on the old Testament	132
Argumentum ad hominem	132
3. Christ an oriental speaking to orientals	134
4. Christ's teaching principles, not rules	137
Literalism of St. Francis and Tolstoi	141
III. Examples of these general considerations	143
1. Characteristic concrete passages in the Sermon on the Mount	145
Associated charities	146
Riches	148
2. The teaching of the great Forty Days	149
Place of Church and Sacraments in Christ's teaching	150
3. Teaching about Sacrifice	155

LECTURE V.

THE TEMPORARY AND THE PERMANENT IN ST. PAUL'S THEOLOGY.

I. Paul the Christian theologian	160
A man of his time	163

	PAGE
Roman citizen	163
Rabbi-trained Jew	164
Paul's Epistles a struggle to express in words the experiences of his soul	165
II. Two channels into which Paul's utterance con- strained: Roman and Jewish, forensic and rabbinic. Run into each other, yet distin- guishable. Neither part of Christianity's final form. All reasoning processes a neces- sary taint of temporariness	169
Paul saves his reasonings by doxologies and practical conclusions	175
III. Examples of Roman or forensic lines of argu- ment.	
1. Adoption: its modern and its Roman meaning	179
2. Justification: both forensic and rabbinic .	184
IV. Examples of Jewish or rabbinic lines of argu- ment.	
Paul a rabbi and not a priest	185
His rabbinism logic rather than theology .	186
1. Rabbinical dealing with facts	188
2. Rabbinical methods of exegesis	190
V. Examples of practical instructions of a tem- porary character.	
1. Favorite figures of illustration	195
2. Instruction to particular churches	195
Women to cover their heads in Corinth .	196

LECTURE VI.

THE TEMPORARY AND THE PERMANENT IN THE APOCALYPTIC STYLE,

PAGE

The fact of that style.

Prevalent and popular in New Testament times 200

Apocalyptic style closely associated with

Eschatological subjects 202

The Apocalyptic style marked by :

1. Use of intense, often gross figures.

2. Fantastic, artificial habit.

3. Enigmatic utterance.

4. A sense of superiority.

5. Conjuring by Phrases 203

Fastens on Christianity a grotesque conception of religion, disloyal to the Gospel . 206

Apocalyptic style has its value, as poetry and vision 210

II. Christ's use of the apocalyptic style.

Uses it as current style of the time 216

The Evangelical records exaggerate Christ's apocalyptic language 219

Christ teaches a delayed as well as an immediate coming 225

Christ's apocalyptic sayings may be interpreted as being already in fulfilment . . . 229

Christ's coming

(1) A present fact.

(2) A spiritual fact.

(3) A progressive fact.

(4) A fact conditioned by man's response 230

III. Later New Testament writers, in their apocalyptic utterance, share current miscon- ceptions, must share any helpful interpreta- tion	233
St. John could hardly have written both the Gospel and Book of Revelation	236
John touches the apocalyptic word into eternal meaning.	240
IV. The Mystical and the Practical. The mystical bridges over the chasm between the Apocalyptic and the Practical	242

LECTURE I.

THE TEMPORARY AND THE PERMANENT INHERENT IN REVELATION.

I. THE positions of one age, held in suspicion merely because they are new, become the easily accepted commonplaces of another age. The ceremonial which to a former generation seemed elaborate, the mark of an advanced school, is everywhere in use without question, and without fear. The current beliefs of Christian people put suddenly by the side of beliefs obtaining in the middle of the last century are a surprising revelation of a forward movement, a progress made unconsciously, yet accepted without hesitation. While the movement is in course there is inevitable pain and anxiety.

It belongs to those who stand in the place of leadership, whether as thinkers or administrators, both to realize this constant movement

themselves and to discover the principles that underlie its healthy advance. It is for them, and among these we must class ourselves, as well from our education as from our ministerial office, in view of what the history of religious progress has taught, to take up such study with good cheer and to disarm the prejudices of others. These changes are certain. They result in larger vision of truth and of service. Men busied in their investigation are put in trust of their value. By their own hopefulness concerning the issue, as well as by their own moderation in statement, they may offset the natural distrust of the mass of Christian people, may make the inevitable revolution so peaceful that all shall gratefully share its blessings. Despite the alarm and even the dangers involved in these progressive investigations, it is not only our duty to undertake them, but we have the ability to carry them through to an honorable issue. For this we have been prepared by the study of history, wherein we see these processes ever going on, and by the breadth of vision which

comes with all scholarship. Courage in the work, confidence in the result, consideration for the fears and ignorance of others as the process goes on,—these are the works demanded of devout scholarship to-day. To such service these lectures bid you, by your sympathetic interest, to make your willing contribution. We may be able at least to blaze the way along which others shall clear a road for Christian thought to travel.

There are three classes of questions that enlist the interest of Christian people: social questions; philosophical questions, the being of God, the person of Christ, the relation of sin to salvation; critical questions, involving the origin, interpretation and value of the Scriptures.

My subject ranges itself with the last of these. The place of the Scriptures, specially of the New Testament, is a fundamental one for Christian thinking and Christian service. The records of fact and truth by Apostolic men are the key to Christianity. How people to-day are to use that key, Christian scholarship must discover.

The Temporary and the Permanent in New Testament Revelation is the inquiry of these lectures. In no critical direction do I see greater help than in such an inquiry. The fact of these two elements, a temporary and a permanent in revelation, is first to be admitted. Principles are to be sought by which these elements are to be distinguished. The help in such discrimination for an intelligent and reasonable Christianity is to be set forth. And all along, not alone must prejudice be disarmed by sympathy and reverence, but approval wait on the results to receive their blessing. Such is one's preconception in favor of his chosen theme, I cannot but feel that in the discrimination between the temporary and the permanent features in our Christian heritage lies the future of Christianity. I would magnify the importance of the subject and make it honorable. "Back to Christ" is the watchword of Christian thinking and Christian living to-day; the Christ recovered must be the permanent Christ out from the temporary, else, as in so many experi-

ences heretofore, the issue will be fanaticism and new discouragement. The whole attitude of the Christian religion, intellectual and practical, is moulded by the apocalyptic style of the Gospels and other New Testament literature; by the theology of Paul's Epistles; how far are style and reasoning part of the permanent treasure of the Christian Church?

The temporary and the permanent in New Testament revelation.

II. The title of these lectures may offend on first hearing. In God's revelation of Himself, certainly in the New Testament, there is no temporary; all is permanent. This was the conviction of an earlier age. It has come to us as a traditional prejudice. Yet, if on examination we find that in the history of interpretation as well as in our own study some principle of discrimination between temporary and permanent has been admitted, we must first cordially concede the fact in the face of our prejudices and our fears: its application, while it may be difficult and disturbing, will then wait

on our honest inquiry. To be unwilling to test our own convictions, and to analyze the real basis of our beliefs, to be unwilling to acknowledge the party to be wrong in order to save the cause, is the last infirmity of earnest and devout minds. There is, to be sure, a passing regret, excusable enough, that things cannot go on just the same, that all men cannot continue to think as they used to when, for example, *we were young*. But this is impossible. Men have never kept on thinking the same, and they never will. The last word has not been said, and never ought to be. God's man faces the fact with cheerful hope, even though he suppress a sigh. The theme may be new in its statement; but if its principle be found one already accepted and acted upon, the brave Christian and scholar will take it and use it in the service of truth. He is confident of nothing so surely as that truth reverently pursued will give new cause to thank God, and to believe in Christ. "Seeing then that we have such hope we use great plainness of speech." *

* II Cor. III : 12.

Our aim, then, is to realize and acknowledge the fact of temporary elements in the New Testament ; to cite illustrations ; to discover, if we may, principles by which the permanent may be discriminated and preserved ; and to find fresh reason in this investigation for courageous and grateful loyalty to the revealed religion of Jesus Christ. Our study will be critical, not in the sense of literary criticism—a work so admirably performed by Prof. Moulton—nor in the sense of the so-called higher criticism, the determining of dates and authors—a work in the process of settlement in our age from whose results no thoughtful man is finding cause to shrink back in alarm. Ours is an *interpretation* of critical work already accepted, a making results real and applying them to living Christianity.

It is manifest that no more important inquiry is opening out before Christian thoughtfulness than the elimination of any temporary element from New Testament Revelation. That revelation is unique : in its message of hope ; in the

Figure it offers for our discipleship. What it has to give of permanent value to the world we are all coming to feel is the world's great prize. Back to the Master pictured in the New Testament are coming not only theology and philosophy, but the races and the religions and the social classes of men. We may not dare hide that universal Figure under either our present-day interpretations or the incidental drapery of His own time. The problem is an ever fresh one how to find the abiding spiritual in the passing historical.

III. The keynote of the separation of the temporary and permanent may find expression in the pregnant word Translation. The word has a richer meaning than the mere rendering from one language to another. All man's inner life, intellectual and spiritual, is a translation from something less real, of less moment, though called natural and coming easily, to something more true and abiding, even to the perfect. A spoken word, a written word, a life lived somewhere and somewhere, a truth discovered in the

germ, all must be *translated*. So the temporary, the incidental, is thrown one side, the permanent emerges. Man's insight, apprehension, appropriation is the prime factor in permanency, in making of the thing once presented something that may live on for other and wiser times. Admit the need of translation, and we do admit it with every spoken and written and lived word whose first incarnation is foreign to us, we have admitted the temporary feature in the permanent. Another tongue, another time, must make the truth its own.

Abiding things never appear to man in a pure and isolated state. Thought must incarnate itself in language to live. "Words cannot be identified with thought," says Sabatier in one of his latest works, "but they are necessary to it. The hero in the romance who was said to be unable to think without speaking was not so ridiculous as was once supposed, for that hero is everybody."* The orthodox Moslem will

* Sabatier, *Outlines of a Philosophy of Religion*, 249-50.

not listen to translation. Not only is the Koran inspired in its every word; its Arab word is alone inspired; and this when Arabic has become absolutely unintelligible in the conquest of new races to Moslem allegiance. The Veda and Avesta are worshipped after a like petrified fashion. A kindred fetichism is the old belief that Hebrew was the language of the Garden of Eden, and that the Church's lessons should be read in a monotone lest man's interpretation be intruded into God's word. The early Christians translated the Scriptures freely into Syriac, Latin, Coptic, into the language of every people to whom they preached the good news of their Gospel. There came a time when the translation of each ethnic church was itself deemed untranslatable; the Ethiopians, for example, applying the theory of verbal inspiration to their barbarous and unintelligible version of the Scriptures.* It was an easy step for the

* Peters. *The Old Testament and the New Scholarship*, 83-84.

Latin Church to refuse the Scriptures to the laity. A passing phase was enshrined as permanent, and blindly worshipped. The striking fact remains, however, that a principle of translation, of discovering the permanent out of the temporary, had been first admitted and then abandoned. Lost in the Dark Ages, translation becomes anew the touchstone of a living faith, translation not merely into the new tongues but into the new life and new hopes of "the nations and peoples called of God into the Unity of His Church."

It is man's business as an intelligent and responsible being to pass on the gifts of his time, its thought and its truth, to those who follow. They cannot be passed on as a sealed and enshrined deposit. They must come to the next age open and instinct with life. No age, not even that of the New Testament, has a monopoly of gifts. Its gifts were rare, were invaluable; they were bestowed upon the ages as a trust to be handed on, to be translated and retranslated for every age to come. It is asked,

Where would an apostle or early saint feel at home, in creed and ceremonial, were he to come suddenly into our modern Christian thought and life? Nowhere, we may answer, if he came *suddenly*; unless in some church, or chapel, or creed that has isolated itself from the moving Christian current, and been left forlorn, its privileges forfeited because it has failed to translate them. * We may be sure that St. Paul and St. Paul's Master, were they to come among us again, would rejoice wherever they found a living faith discovering and applying the revealed word as an eternal word. "The most destructive thing in the world, because the most contrary to nature, is the strain to keep things fixed." To keep the old forms without new adaptation, or to keep fixed interpretations for forms that have become endeared by ages of reverent use, is to act as unbelievers in a living Christ for living men. The kernel is ever to be found within the husk, to use a vigorous figure of to-day's exegesis, the

* Bartlett. The Letter and the Spirit, 151-2.

husk be left to perish, or if preserved, kept only for antiquarian honor.

These principles embodied in the word translation, are so evident and so universally accepted, it may seem gratuitous to repeat and emphasize them. May they not be taken for granted, and we pass on? Yet, the taking for granted often needs to be brought home, the truth freely admitted elsewhere to be courageously applied in directions where men hesitate. "I freely admit temporary elements in all religion and the necessity of rescuing the permanent from their swaddling bands; I am, of course, prepared to concede the temporary character of much of what we find in the Old Testament," says a thoughtful and devout scholar to me, "but I certainly hesitate to apply that principle to the New Testament. That is a revelation given once for all, yet for all time." We do well to hesitate in applying results of unquestionable value for all other human possessions, even for the preparatory revelation of God Himself, to this final gift from God seen in Jesus Christ.

Yet the reasonings hold good for the New Testament as well, if that revelation comes that it may be one of man's possessions, though it be the best and greatest of them ; comes in human ways to human apprehension.

The individual steps forth in each age to make the revelation his own, and the individual must do a final translating work. Revelation implies a receiving spirit. Revelation must have a response in man, not as a measure of the revelation, but to apprehend it. Without that response there is no revelation ; for the revelation is not an abstraction, something existing of itself, it is an intelligible word to an apprehending soul. The soul must make it his own. God does nothing which concerns man's well-being apart from man himself. "God does not begin," it has been admirably said, "where man leaves off ; we need not sit with our hands folded to hearken what he will say concerning us." * We put ourselves into the attitude of hearers, of helpers of

* Canon Inge on the Inspiration of the Individual.

the revelation. The human reception puts the changing temporary element face to face with the divine permanency. It is not a question of what it is possible for God to give, but of what it is possible to make our own. Man can receive from God what he has an intuitive power to grasp. That is the divine side of man's knowledge. "All reasoned conviction," says Martineau, "is human ; immediate intuition is divine." * Intuition is man's last attitude toward a word of God. That intuitive attitude is not reached till sense and reason have done their necessary work, till the man has heard the voice in a language that he can understand and so is prepared to recognize that the voice is none other than the Voice of God. A Revelation given once for all within human limitations must be appropriated of man, age after age, according to his time and race and tongue, according to his place in the developing order.

IV. Further, if Christianity is a *universal* religion, if the New Testament has a message for all

* Martineau's Seat of Authority 320-21.

races of men in all time, there must be a separation of the permanent from the temporary in its revelation of truth. As Translation is one keynote in the evolution of the permanent from the temporary elements in revelation, translation into the language and thought of another time, translation into the receptivity of the individual, Universality is another such note. Its universal character is shown as we put its local limitations one side.

The universal application of the Gospel of Jesus Christ is our gladness and our boast. It is the stronghold of missionary effort. It is the basis of our superior confidence in the religion of Christ as compared with ethnic religions. That confidence perishes if features appropriate to its first promulgation are to be imposed upon all times and races. If baptism in any given amount of water be of the essence of the regenerating sacrament, then the Christian religion must be limited in country and climate.

What is of universal value is to be ascertained by discrimination. It is the business of the

religious man, of the man concerned with character-making, to distinguish differences, to sift that he may save what is worth saving. He may not accept things in the bulk, as they are, if he be in trust of a possession for all mankind. He cannot stop with Leviticus or John Baptist or Judaizing Christianity, though each serve as ushers to fuller truth. God reveals Himself to mankind as a whole by degrees; the universal features of His revelation are to be tested by devout inquiry and consecrated experience. Christianity bids a man, as he stands in trust for the race, to decide between differences and keep what is to be kept. It bids him realize that truth and duty are not all clear, nor on the surface; that there are reasons both ways, that no one can be compelled to be good, that there is always escape to the other alternative,* that there is something to find and when found to hold on to. It proclaims that the inner man, the individual inner man, is the ultimate author-

* Latham's *Pastor Pastorum* 24, *passim*.

ity, and if that authority proclaims a truth or a duty to be unquestionable believe it and do it the man must, though he stand alone in the universe with God as he knows Him. It avows at last that behind Holy Scripture is the Holy Spirit, and the voice of the Spirit is heard of all men in all ages whispering God's way and will, whispering even the meaning of God's Revelation made in His Son. The universal man will bring this universal test to revealed truth, using all the light that all the ages have given to make revelation plain to him, to save him from his own ignorance and pride.

If a religion is universal, temporary features are to be looked for in its revelation. Only the limited says at once all it has to say. We find as fact that the method of the Universal Father unfolding His counsels has been to speak first to a family, a tribe, a race; to use an individual, a group, a Church, as the medium of his message. What is thought at first to be one's own is found to be too large, too deep to be kept as an exclusive possession; demands translation,

expansion ; is held in trust to be shared with others and adapted for their use. Its universality is a discovery, hardly suspected till its value is found not to be satisfied by its first meaning and use. This has been a process shared alike by prophecies uttered in the old dispensation and by words of Christ spoken in the new. Proclaimed at the outset as universal they would neither have been accepted nor understood. Their universality is a process both of realization and of adaptation.

No institution, no Bible has any value apart from its serviceableness to men ; it proves its right to exist by its power of adaptation. This power of adaptation is the very proof that the Christian religion is universal. If Christianity had been what many have again and again claimed she was, tied to some perishable dogma, affiliated to some political notion, bound fast to some ecclesiastical or social organization ; if her truth had crystallized the hard creed of the Donatists, if her politics had become linked with the divine right of kings, if her social order

had adopted the cult of the ascetic or the leveler—proof texts for all these to be found by the worshipper of the letter as itself permanent and untranslatable—she would ere this have either perished as valueless or survived only as the property of the bigot.* A downward tendency inheres in all human systems, a tendency to become narrow and preëmpted. A divine gift for mankind must be able to bear the searching light of criticism, the white light of publicity. The permanent can stand it, comes out more precious. Behold! how our Lord Jesus Christ is passing on through the ages, receiving from each their characteristic homage. We creatures of a day would enshrine Him as our own peculiar possession; He breaks through the graveclothes to be the living Lord of living men.

This universal character of the Christian religion, at once our proud claim and its distinctive mark, brings on the separation of the temporary from the permanent elements in its presentation. The New Testament Revelation cannot survive,

* Bartlett, *Letter and Spirit*, 126.

save as an historic monument, unless this distinction is both realized and applied. Christ Himself will survive, for the New Testament may be said to be no longer essential to man's knowledge of Him. He has been discovered as greater than the records about Him. While we return to that record to confirm our picture, we find Him not entombed in its pages but shining forth from them. Christ could live on, the Gospel could live on, were the Gospels as the story of His Life to perish. It is well for us to realize that neither on the Church nor on the Scripture rests the preservation of Christ for man, however essential heretofore has been their witness. Christ's life has been now written on the tablets of the heart. The loss of the records, the failure of the Church would be grave, it would not be ruinous.

Each age asks, Is the Christian Religion doomed because incapable of adapting itself to changing conditions? The answer sometimes seems to be, Yes, because men have made the temporary features permanent, have bound

inseparably together the universal and the perishable. Religion itself can never perish. Where do you find the religion for man? Christians are put on the defensive to show that the religion to survive is the religion of our Lord Jesus Christ as given in the New Testament. Man is incorrigibly religious; shall his religion continue to be the religion of the Gospel? The very condition of life is adaptation to environment. "If the age has not lost faith," writes Bishop Boyd Carpenter in his Bampton Lectures, "has it lost faith in religion, and is Christianity slowly taking the place among extinct things, like the flora and fauna of earlier times, doomed because lacking power to adapt itself to changed conditions?"* Christianity did so adapt itself in the earliest Christian ages, despite the panic fear of conservative Judaizers; and carried as champions of its adaptation conservatives like Peter and James. The story of the elimination of the temporary is

* *The Permanent Elements of Religion.* Boyd Carpenter, 4.

recorded step by step in the very New Testament record itself. It is a failure to share the faith and courage of New Testament men to hesitate to continue that separating process, to pronounce the work complete at any stage earlier or later. Those men faced in their adaptations a weight of traditionalism, both without and in their own hearts, which leaves us timid and faithless in even our radicalism. "Man's permanent spiritual demand," says the Bampton lecturer, "is for Dependence, Fellowship and Progress."* It is for us to determine whether these demands are met in the New Testament and by what wise reading thereof they are to be discovered and retained.

We talk of the Everlasting Gospel, but it is not its form that is everlasting, but the spirit behind the form. Revealed religion has its value, but that value is not to relieve man from the duty of thinking; to give him nourishment already elaborated, requiring neither digestion

* Boyd Carpenter, Chap. II.

nor assimilation. That were to empty revelation of beauty and cut man off from development. "Natural Religion," says Martineau, "*represents* God, stands for Him, manifests Him; Revealed Religion *presents* God, brings Him into man's immediate presence." * Yet it does not save man from the duty of recognizing and appropriating the revelation when made.

Theology, the science of God, is permanent truth reached from temporary. In theology we are ever sloughing off temporary features to find the everlasting God. Transient doubts give way to permanent spiritual convictions by tentative processes, by embodiment in successive and passing formulæ, by the assertion of the eternal Yea over the passing Nay.

The Church, as the society of God's children, is finding in her historic creeds and liturgies the permanent out from the temporary. Men must make symbols individually real, lest the generation be orthodox and not pious. The historic

* Jackson's Martineau, 257.

creeds themselves are not in the words of the New Testament. They appeal for their vindication to the New Testament. They aim to utter nothing that can not be proved from sacred Scripture. Not only do the creeds incorporate other language than that of the New Testament in their expression of faith; they also lay new emphasis, enlarging on truths on which Scripture utters but a brief word or makes but a hint. The creeds were composed, as the New Testament books were written, all honest thinking now agrees, to answer the questions of their time. The answers are given in the language and after the light of the time itself. They are to be translated into the language of each age for universal illumination. We must be as fearless, while we are as reverent, as the framers of the creeds. As they dealt with the Scripture, so may we. As they dealt with the sacred formulæ come down to them from Apostolic men, so may we deal with the formulæ they have handed on to us. The spirit that guided them still guides the Church, and it is the same Spirit

which was promised by the Master to His immediate disciples. We may not rewrite Scripture, though each generation has its version, and rejoices courageously when its version better expresses the Scripture word, though the new expression overthrow cherished ideas. We may not rewrite the historic creeds (in some paragraphs we honestly wish we might), both because Christendom is divided and can never be brought to agree on any change, and because they are liturgical hymns of praise endeared to Christian people in their very language by generations of use. But we may explain, paraphrase, interpret, translate, for our children and our time. We may find the eternal truths under their fleeting expression, truths as dear to us as to the original formulators, though our explanation be otherwise—the truths of the Eternal God, of the Incarnate Son taking our complete human nature even into the realms of the dead, to whom as risen Lord is committed all judgment and authority; of continued conscious identity, the spirit being clothed upon

with a body, we affirm not how, preferring the reticence of St. Paul to the confident materialism of a less thoughtful time.

V. These are the considerations to which I invite you in this course of lectures. My hope is that we may be wise enough and brave enough and trustful enough to recognize as a principle the distinction between permanent and temporary in our New Testament Charter. The principle admitted, we may go on to apply it and to start applications for others to work out. The principle is already admitted by the process of Translation to which we have submitted our sacred documents in every age and land, and to which we are increasingly bringing the symbols and ceremonial of the Christian Church. The principle is essential to our proud boast that Christianity is for all men of all time. In it is wrapped up the opportunities of Christian scholarship and the hopes of Christian aspiration for the days immediately before us.

Though the subject may seem to be and has been spoken of as new, like all inquiries after

truth it has had its times of advocacy, it is involved in many subordinate religious subjects whose pursuit has been carried afar. Many skillful and honored hands have undertaken tasks involving this supreme distinction, from whose results the Church has realized invaluable benefit, though failing to apply the truth for themselves, or to honor its fearless advocacy.

The history of Christianity has been the story of man's constant effort, in his wisest and most earnest representatives, to separate and to transmit the permanent elements in the Christian religion. The temporary has constantly had to give way. The timid have ever feared lest in the process the ark of God should fall. Recall, for a concluding moment, the story of such work.

In the establishment of Christianity, as recorded in the book of Acts, the original disciples proved unable to shake off the fetters of a passing thought and ceremonial. St. Paul was called of the Spirit to save Christianity from being a Jewish sect which simply confessed the

Messiah to have come. Whatever bonds of his own fastening St. Paul laid upon primitive Christianity, he "transplanted the young religion," in the appreciative words of Wernle, "into the great world of civilization, created its first profound system of thought, and developed a new form of personal religion. In so doing he was the first to introduce Christianity into the world's history." * Yet Paul's Epistles not only present, as we shall see at greater length, lines of reasoning which have ceased to be living, but abound in the discussion of questions whose principles and conclusions are alike obsolete. The place of woman to-day in the family and in the social order cannot be that she held in Corinth; nor the duties of citizenship in a free republic be those of a Roman under the Cæsars. That the large vision of the Apostle enabled him to discern great principles within passing usages did not save him from frequent detailed directions which a growing Christianity must

* Wernle. *Beginnings of Christianity*, 358.

cast off. That good men still affirm the binding obligation of these details of St. Paul is one reason for these lectures.

The names of praise in the history of the Church's scholarship are those of men, who up to their best light have endeavored to discover and champion the permanent in the Christian oracles. Origin first, with many a Greek father following; even Augustine in his uncontroversial writings; England's great Hooker; men in our own time at such opposite poles as Bishop Gore, and James Martineau, the latter writing on the Severance of Undivine Elements from Religion; at least two Bampton courses, that of Boyd Carpenter in 1887 on the Permanent Elements of Religion, that of Robert Edward Barlett in 1888 on the Letter and the Spirit, all bear witness to the reality of this present theme.

In the practical working of the Church the same witness is borne. The High Churchmen contends that many portions of the Prayer Book, especially the additions made in the Second Book, were concessions to the spirit of the time

which will be dropped from the permanent book that is to be. The Broad Churchman finds in older features of the liturgy phraseology retained which, if it may not be dropped as obsolete and even untrue for us, must yet be allowed the widest latitude of interpretation. In the whole system of the lectionary and of special Psalms, which latter is curiously enough the revival of a more primitive and catholic usage, the principle of selection affirms a permanent and universal value of some parts of Scripture over others.

Nothing of value has been lost in the concessions heretofore made of temporary features in the divine revelation. The principle once admitted, there remains only the long process of its careful application. The ground taken in these lectures is already familiar ; we have simply failed to realize it and to draw honest conclusions. Men have felt that a halt must be called somewhere, and they have called it, with hue and cry of danger, just where they felt comfortable in halting themselves. The truth is, there can be no halt in applying this illuminating truth

to the Church's endowment, till all the permanent treasure has been discovered and recovered, while the temporary is relegated to its proper and useful place as matter of scaffolding and history.

VI. It is proposed to follow this preliminary lecture, whose aim has been to affirm the idea of permanent and temporary features in the New Testament revelation and to secure its respectful recognition, with such illustrative application as time and ability allow.

I shall first try to show that a written revelation necessarily involves temporary features, to be reckoned with and discarded. Taking up then the Person of Christ of Whose work and word the revelation is witness, I shall ask you to study the temporary features involved of necessity in the Incarnation; and then those to be found and separated from the very Teachings of Christ Himself. The methods and conclusions of St. Paul's Theology will be our next study, bringing to light temporary characteristics of marked influence and perhaps injury on the

Christian faith. A final lecture on the temporary type of Christian thought seen in apocalyptic utterance will serve to draw a helpful line between the mystical and the practical in Christianity.

We are laying out for ourselves a hard task. We must pray first of all for the spirit to think and to do those things that are right, to be saved from ingenious and sensational utterance, to have as the one object of our study the attainment of a better knowledge of Jesus, a fuller appreciation of the Christian religion.

LECTURE II.

THE TEMPORARY AND THE PERMANENT IN A WRITTEN REVELATION.

I. CHRISTIANITY has been maintained, at least by the Protestant world, to be the Religion of a Book.

The sweeping pronouncement that ours is a book religion, though an article of faith in which most of us have been trained, is open to modification. In applying the corrective we must not swing away from the truth.

Two facts limit the emphasis to be laid upon Christianity as a book religion.

1. The Church existed before the book, and determined what belonged in the book.

Further, and of still greater significance,

2. The book is a *Revelation* of God, is God speaking to man. Revelation is a more distinctive mark of Christianity's book than Inspira-

tion. Inspiration is a thing of degrees, and may be affirmed of many kinds of utterance, even the merely secular. Revelation is a word from God alone, telling of His way and His will. Revelation implies one receiving the revelation. Fearful of the subjective factor in all communications we yet must always exercise it. There must be a response in the hearer, else there is no Word. No amount of authority would establish the book, could enforce it, unless the writing appealed to conscience, is made one's own.

While, however, the Church existed before the book and set its seal upon it; while also the receiving soul must make the revelation of the book its own, still the book is the standard to which Christianity must ever refer, by which its truth and claims must ever be tested.

The first of the Lambeth corner-stones of union is, "The Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, as containing all things necessary to salvation, and as being the rule and ultimate standard of faith."

A former distinguished Bohlen lecturer, whose

course on the Peace of the Church I hold to be an invaluable manual for intelligent seekers after truth as this church is in trust for the same, entitles one of his lectures *The Archives*. "It is impossible to deny," writes Dr. Huntington, "that, for better or for worse, the fortunes of Christ's religion have been knitted to a book. The argument may be put into three sentences. First, the world cannot live, at least cannot live contentedly, without religion. Secondly, religion cannot live, at least cannot adequately live, without records, without an authenticated history, a book of words and acts. Thirdly, among such books, and they are many, the Christian Scriptures, even by the confession of unfriendly critics, stand supreme." * We hear another witness to the even more unqualified position "that in all civilized religions divine revelation is presented to man in the form of a sacred writing." "The inner experiences of men of God," Sabatier goes on to say,

* Huntington's *Peace of the Church*, 62, 73.

“and the witness of them that they give to the world, express themselves naturally in speech, and this in its turn is transformed into Scripture. . . . The rank of the Hebrew and Christian Bible is thus found to be logically determined by the moral worth of the Hebrew and the Christian religions.” *

As long as apostolic men were alive, personal witnesses of Truth Incarnate, a spoken word sufficed. When the time came that they must be called from earth, their witness became a written word. The world now read the message it had before listened to and memorized. The written word was the message continued in the only way it could be continued, and by it the witnesses being dead yet speak, and He to whom they witness speaks through them.

That Christianity is a religion of a book is not a defect in Christianity, is rather its characteristic and its glory. The Christian religion is

* Sabatier. *Outlines of a Philosophy of Religion*. Page 60.

an historical religion, given to men in time, revealed by persons who have actually lived and taught. So the Christian creed is a statement of facts, facts in time felt to be facts of eternal moment, these facts to be verified as a basis of belief and hope. We read the Bible to learn what God has done, as well as what God has said. As long as men hold on to religion, they will hold on to the Christian Scriptures as religion's book.

The value of the book has been exaggerated even to making its defenders a laughing stock. The bibliolatry of the Hutchinsonians opposed to "Newton's Principia" what they called "Moses' Principia," affirming that men are dependent on the Bible for a knowledge of the fundamental principles of all true science and philosophy. * Failure to realize the Bible's true purpose does not discredit that for which it was given; it rather emphasizes its value by man's disposition to extend its scope beyond the legiti-

* Flint's Agnosticism, 587.

mate. The Bible has been worth so much, we can sympathize with the reverence for its every word felt by the devout Scotchman and his New England fellow religionist. Reaction from superstition must not throw over piety.

We take up our New Testament. If we are honest enough to speak out what we conscientiously feel, we wish some things therein were not there, that certain texts were not as we find them. We are not bound in slavery to the letter as were our fathers. Perhaps they do not belong there. Perhaps their place has been overemphasized, missing perspective. Perhaps they are of the perishing elements which have been "fulfilled," the language of riddles which in God's Providence have now been solved.

"God, wishing to speak to us, has never chosen any but human organs." The divine and human elements are constantly and inevitably intermingled. Religious men, notably Christian men, have been unable or unwilling frankly to accept this fact. Life has never been seen apart from living beings, nor light apart from luminous

vibrations. We are to recognize the method of the divine chemistry, realize that the divine is ever to be discovered enshrined within human vestings, and by the exercise of human powers of analysis and interpretation. *

Two sources of authority for the Christian Religion, two witnesses for Christ in all ages, His words, Holy Scripture; His Spirit, interpreting those words. The inner is behind the outer. The outer is fundamental for the inner to work upon and make its own. There must be the material for the spirit's moulding.

II. That the Christian Religion appeals to a book, must be tested in its claim and truth by a written revelation, is the *first* reason for separating permanent from temporary elements.

Any written revelation involves of necessity such separation; (1) because it is written in time; (2) because its true contents must be determined; (3) because its meaning must be interpreted to other ages than its own.

* Sabatier. Outlines of a Philosophy of Religion, 61-62

A book is a human thing, a creation of parchment and hieroglyphics, of signs striving to embody thought, within which the revelation is bound. Our Bible is "a huge volume, clogged by the weight of ancient chronicles, and bending beneath a burden of old prophecies hard to be understood." *

A book, *our sacred book* ; is in a language ; of an age ; by many individual writers ; is collected in a canon ; must be copied, transmitted, printed, translated from earlier to later tongues, to other hearts. Language itself, notably written language, demands this translating process, is parabolic, pictorial, has a style whose expression as vestiture of thought varies with the age. Questions of inspiration arise over our Book, of canonicity, of editing, of kinds of literature and their scope, inevitable questions on a book. From all these emerges a permanent message, the temporary little by little put into the background by a reading at once scholarly and devout.

* Peace of Church, 64.

Is it loss or gain, that this sacred book must be subjected to this clearing process, loss or gain that we have this treasure in earthen vessels? Are bodies, we may equally ask, a hindrance, or a help to the spirit, and as we ask hear the wise Apostle claiming for life eternal a spiritual body, and desiring not to be unclothed but clothed upon. Is the external world either a delusion of man's mortal mind or an enemy thrust into the presence of an unwilling God? The Christian Hymn of Creation sings of God's need that He express Himself in the works of His hands and of His joy in the result. Church and Sacraments, outward and visible signs of an inward and spiritual grace, are not concessions to the infirmity of man's material nature, but manifestations of the divine beauty and love. The book of God's words invites to open and read and interpret, but not as an ungrateful task necessitated by earth's limitations; rather as appealing to the joy of study and discovery and appropriation. A true alchemy may be set at work by which material things are transformed into the gold of character.

Of these demands, which a written revelation inevitably lays upon us, to separate out what is permanent, I ask your attention first to the Canon as strikingly illustrating the point in hand.

The Canon, originally the rule by which the determination was reached, has come to mean the result itself, the books belonging in the book which make the Bible. The process of determining the canon has hitherto been but dimly realized even by scholars; it is now clear beyond any question. Study of the process startles the student of the Bible; it changes his attitude toward the book, but the change is from a conventional feeling to one of growing satisfaction and confidence.

Old copies of the Bible, familiar on candle-stands in country parlors, portrayed on the cover a hand passing down from mysterious clouds a sacred volume bound in gilt. Intended as symbolical the picture became theological. A heavenly hand appearing detached from a body, wrapped about by the mystery of cloudi-

ness, holding a book for human hands to seize, became our idea of the origin of the Christian Scriptures. They lost human, historical, intelligent connection. To affirm such of them seemed a profanation of their sacredness. The Bible was put away on a shelf with the uncreated Koran, with the Veda which the Brahmins forbade to study as other books are studied, with the Law of Moses over whose awful sacredness the Scribes of our Lord's day mumbled their incantations.

It has now come to be recognized that the forming of the canon of Scripture was a historical process, covering some three centuries; a sifting work in which much earthly matter was long held in solution. Again and again, in different quarters, the right of certain books to find a place in the Word of God was questioned, while others finally excluded were for a time reverently received. Though the number of books in question, either for retention or exclusion, was relatively small; yet such prized writings as the Book of Revelation and the Epistle to the Heb-

rews were in doubt till about the year 400, and there are manuscripts of the New Testament of the tenth century which omit the former. The process in determining the books of the New Testament was but a repetition of that which obtained in forming the Old Testament canon. More than five hundred years intervened between the gathering of the books of the Law into the first canon, about 440 B. C., and the final allotting of Song of Songs and Ecclesiastes to the sacred writings a little before the year 100 of our Christian era. Some of the prophetic books were in existence five hundred years before their authoritative character as a revelation from God was acknowledged.* The receiving mind and heart were determining by all the methods at its command whether it was a word from God. It could be imposed upon by no celestial fireworks. There were no signs attached to the books to startle or awe into submission. They were

* Peters. *The Old Testament and the New Scholarship*, Chap. I.

simply writings making a claim on intelligence and devotion. It took centuries to decide whether that claim was to be acknowledged as the highest.

The devout Sabatier has gathered this illuminating fact into a few terse sentences. "The Bible appears to us as the work, slowly and laboriously constructed, of the ancient Jewish Synagogue and of the Early Jewish Church. It needed more than four centuries to establish and to delimitate the New Testament. The books which compose it were still in the time of Eusebius divided into two classes: books admitted everywhere and books contested. Why then should we not have the same liberty as Origen of doubting the authenticity of Second Peter, for example, or as Denis of Alexandria, in discussing the apostolic origin of the Apocalypse?"*

This historical and gradual determining of the canon of both Testaments, along lines and in the

* Sabatier. *Outlines of a Philosophy of Religion*, 52.

use of powers familiar to experts in deciding like claims, while it is undeniably the process by which we have the Holy Bible to-day, is not even yet grasped, in its fact and its consequences, by the mass of Christian people. The first result, on awakening to a realization of this simple method of recognizing God's voice, is a feeling of uncertainty and anxiety, the second and abiding one, a conviction of deep thankfulness. Old and traditional conceptions of an unquestioned and absolute demarcation between the inspired and the uninspired, of a volume bound together so to speak at once and once for all, are forever lost, and in losing them we bid good-by to that which is both false and fragile. Into their place comes the vision of a process by which man's wisdom divinely illuminated has grown to recognize the voice as the voice of the Lord.

We can no longer say, This is divine *because*, it is in the canon and not in the Apocrypha, because it is in Peter and not in Clement—it was long an open question whether a book should be put in the canon or relegated to the Apocrypha,

whether Clement should be left in and Peter left out. There is a deeper test of what is divine than being counted among the books, as there was another reason for so counting books to be sacred than because they were found together. Some divine messages are not in the canon, some words therein are not from God. Revelation and Scripture are not in all their boundaries synonymous. God's revelation of Himself is not *confined* to a book. He has also been revealed to individual souls, to His Church deliberating on His way and will. The enlightened Church, the consecrated soul has become through long historical processes the witness to the book, voucher for its credentials as a word from God. Much of a temporary character remains in the book. The Church, as by its wise and devout membership of many generations it determined what belongs to the book, so by that same illuminated wisdom will it determine the relative value of what has been included therein. It has never been necessary, as pious but misguided ingenuity long argued, that the Bible include

just so much ; that four is, for example, the heavenly number for Gospels. We could spare some books and still have a revelation of God which would meet our essential needs. A book might conceivably be added to the canon by which our view of God would be made more rich. The canon is doubtless closed because we are so far removed both from the time and the spirit in which the books were written, and because our Christianity has made its list of sacred books and gone its several ways. Yet, even now, some great branch of the Christian Church might conceivably drop out Second Peter, either because of its contents or its authorship ; and the discovery in some Red Sea monastery of a lost Epistle beyond any question written by St. Paul might bring divided Christendom together again for one hour while it reopened the canon.

The process of determining the canon has been all along a separation of temporary from permanent elements. That separation is still a guiding principle in determining the use we shall make of the revelation and the value of its

several parts. We have not yet begun to realize or to apply the significance of a sacred volume whose true contents have been determined by the wisdom of history. "History" "historical" are found to be words and processes deserving our reverence. The illumination which comes to our religion from a book historically written and historically determined, is like that we feel when we learn that the Church is a Church of History, and did not spring into being apart from the needs and the gifts of men. It is akin to the supreme satisfaction felt by our intellect and manhood in the discovery of this present age that the majestic order of the universe has been and is ever unfolding progressively, was not created in its final form by a single fiat, and the key to this awakening discovery is the survival of the permanent, the elimination of the temporary. As a boy, I thought, partisanlike as we all are in youth, that a word was either inspired or not inspired, and if pronounced inspired the subject was closed ; that you read from the Book of Wisdom on all Saints Day at your peril, since it

only belonged in the Apocrypha. God's voice, I have come to learn, may be there though the Church's judgment leaves the book *as a whole* outside the sacred volume.

Do we open the way, by such considerations, for hopeless uncertainty and confusion? Only to souls lacking the courage of their birthright, false to the principles which guided the fathers in determining and handing on the revealed word. We awake rather to the consciousness that the decisions by which we have our present Scriptures were the result of most careful and painstaking separation of material, and that the practical unanimity on all the books of value gives us a treasure assured beyond question. Wisdom and piety did not cease with one age. The Holy Spirit has not deserted His Church. The study of the canon summons to a courageous faith. The call to sift out the temporary that the permanent may abide is a witness to belief in a living Lord.

III. By this study, we discover that the question of canonicity is of greater relative importance

than that of Inspiration. The inspiration of the Bible is no longer, as was once held, its primary mark. Inspiration is still to be affirmed of the Bible, an exceptional inspiration for an exceptional purpose. Yet we no longer regard inspiration as confined to the Bible, nor the one determining feature by which its books were included in a sacred collection. The man is inspired and not the books, and his inspiration is recognized by enlightened Christian responsiveness. "When God wished to give the Decalogue to Israel, *He* did not write with His finger on tables of stone; He raised up Moses, and from the consciousness of Moses the Decalogue sprang. In order that we might have the Epistle to the Romans, there was no need to dictate it to the Apostle; God had only to create the powerful individuality of Saul of Tarsus, well knowing that when once the tree was made the fruit would follow in due course. The same with the Gospel; He did not drop it from the sky; He did not send it by an angel; He caused Jesus to be born from the very bosom of the

human race, and Jesus gave us the Gospel that had blossomed in His inmost heart."* The man is not lost in his inspiration. He uses his natural and acquired powers to clothe the message that has been given him. It is for that message the ear of man is listening, to recognize it if he can, and to receive messenger and message from God Himself.

It is now universally admitted that the individual style is not destroyed by the inspiration. As better or worse, as hiding or helping the message, what is for all time is to be disentangled from the style, which is that of the man and the day. "With whatever inspiration God has endowed men," writes Sabatier, "that inspiration has always passed through human subjectivity; it has only been able either to express or to translate itself in the language and the turn of mind of a particular individual and of a particular time. Now, no individual and historical form can be absolute. If the contents are

* Sabatier. *Outlines of a Philosophy of Religion*, 57.

divine, the vessel is always earthen. The organ of the revelation of God necessarily limits it.”*

The literary style of the Bible writers is not given to the race as itself marked with divine approval. That literary style must be understood and translated as well as the language. The writer must be made to speak in a manner agreeable to another day. All the literature of the New Testament, as well as that of the Old, is written with *a purpose*. The writing is colored by that purpose. That purpose is good, but in a measure personal to himself, and so incidental and temporary. The study of the purpose of each of the four Evangelists is a commonplace of translation for intelligent Bible classes. This personal element is necessary in any revelation. There is no such thing as an abstract, universal, unrelated style, as a scheme of writing for all races and ages on the face of the Heavens. Yet this personal element must be treated, so far as it affects the message, as a temporary feature.

* Sabatier, *Outlines of a Philosophy of Religion*, 61.

The obscure passages must all be not only explained, but as they offend and hinder must be omitted. Christian readers will have favorite writers and favorite books; will pass over altogether considerable portions of the written revelation. The Christian Church will claim the right to omit certain verses or paragraphs in public or devotional reading.

In the *liturgical* use of the Bible this principle of separation between permanent and temporary, this consciousness that inspiration does not extend to all alike, takes on a very practical and persuasive form.

The principle has been long acknowledged in a timid fashion. There is a hesitancy to apply it more fully or to confess our recognition of it, because of archaic and ignorant conceptions of the very nature and method of God's revelation. It is a mistaken view of the Bible that requires any passage either to be used as a whole in public worship or not to be used at all. The feeling is not properly described as reverence for God's word; it is an unintelligent treatment of

its human and therefore its passing elements. Modifications in liturgical use come slow, and properly so because of our attachment to the prized devotional forms of generations. We shall continue to read of the Three Heavenly Witnesses in the Epistle for the First Sunday after Easter, part of the Prayer Book, long after we have omitted it from the lectionary as a lesson from the Bible for Trinity Sunday evening. It will sometime go from the Epistle, being not a part, as it there claims, of I John v. So the Commandments, in the Ante Communion Service will, I am sure, be heard by our children one sentence only for each Commandment. We shall omit, in liturgical use, clauses suited only for the conditions of their original utterance, found notably in the Fourth Commandment, and clearly enough in the Fifth and Tenth. God's permanent message will be the one clause, "Remember the Lord's Day to keep it holy"; "Honor thy father and thy mother"; "Thou shalt not covet"; and the people can answer with a ready heart, "Lord, have mercy upon us,

and incline our hearts to keep this law." In the burial chapter there are verses which either from their obscurity or their harshness mar the effectiveness of an otherwise well-nigh perfect word of comfort from God. Baptism for the dead requires explanation not suited to the hour of sorrow. "Let us eat and drink for to-morrow we die"; "Evil communications corrupt good manners," the cry of the Epicurean, the warning to the dissolute, are jarring words in the house of mourning. We retain these verses solely from an obsolescent loyalty to Scripture *as a whole*, from failure to apply the winnowing principle that edification is found in the permanent alone, archaic interest only in the temporary. In the Psalter, where the use of Scripture is emphatically devotional rather than instructive, the appointment or the permission of Selections of Psalms has long recognized a permanent out from a passing religious value. In this usage, the Church of Rome, following the earlier church, has been wiser than the reformed Church of England. Our own Church,

by introducing Selections and increasing their number, has come into line with a generous Catholicity. We have not yet dared to apply the principle to *verses* of individual Psalms, omitting such as are of passing or questionable moral character, as in the 69th Psalm appointed for Good Friday. The structural character of many Psalms introduces a denunciatory element as a sort of background for the larger vision and more devout trust. Such dark contrasts, such separateness of the chosen people from the condemned and hated, however necessary to keep faith and goodness alive, does not belong to the permanent Christianity of the Gospel. No permissive selection will be adapted to popular use, which does not print the selected Psalms by themselves. No congregation will read six verses only of Psalm 31, as is permitted in the Second Selection, until those verses are printed apart. I doubt if any of you have ever heard the psalm so used. The time will come when such psalms and portions of psalms only will be printed in the Prayer Book for devotional use,

as the church in its wisdom has pronounced edifying. Then we can read the noble 139th psalm, "O Lord, Thou hast searched me out and known me," without offending the sensitive Christian conscience by compelling a congregation to read verses 19—22, "Wilt thou not slay the wicked, O God . . . I hate them right sore."

The mind of the Church is manifested in this increasing use of selections and in changes approved and demanded in the lectionary. There is going to be a still more marked and courageous application of the distinction between what is temporary and what is of permanent value in the written Word. "In the Prayer Book of Edward VI", we quote a recent article from the *Spectator*, "we find the privilege asserted with delightful frankness: 'The Old Testament is appointed for the First Lessons at Matins and Even Song, and shall be read through every year once, except certain books and chapters which be least edifying and might best be spared, and therefore are left unread. The New Testament is appointed for the Second Lessons at

Matins and Even Song, and shall be read over orderly every year thrice ; except the Apocalypse, out of which there can be only certain Lessons appointed upon divers proper Feasts'—The laity of 1904 are not children, whose reading must be supervised by the Church. No man is bound to wrest his conscience into harmony with a morality incompatible with the teaching of Christ ; but what thinking Christian does not think himself so bound ? The exercise of the moral judgment is a wholesome exercise. 'Why even of yourselves judge ye not what is right', said Christ".

IV. The distinction between temporary and permanent is thus seen to apply to a written revelation in that it is first written and then edited. Men have composed it, and men have put it together. In man's work, however guided by the Spirit of God, there are always of necessity human, that is perishable, elements. They are fitted to perish. They ought to perish. Man not only writes and collects the books of the Bible, man also *interprets* what he has accepted as a word from God. As he uses he interprets.

Our thought must be turned finally, as we consider the temporary and permanent in a written revelation, to the value of this principle in using and explaining the word.

Are we ready to carry this principle to all parts of the Bible? Have we the courage of our conscientious discovery? Are apostles limited by conditions of their time and knowledge and use of language as well as patriarchs and priests, writers of psalm and prophecy? Is even the written record of what Jesus our Lord said and did when on earth to be subjected to the same separating process, His permanent message for man's salvation emerging from His word of passing phrase and application, He Himself standing forth as He is for all time out from what He said and did when incarnate among a local people and in a time of peculiar limitations? In this lecture we can but seek to learn whether the principle is universally true, reserving its application, to details of Christ's person and words and of apostolic teaching, to later lectures. We may well hesitate as we

approach the inner sanctuary of our religion, may rigorously subject intellectual processes to spiritual tests. But if our principle is a true and saving principle, we will be courageous in its application under the guidance of the same Spirit. Men destined to occupy places of counsel and construction in the Christian Church must be ready to move, with reverent but firm step, along paths where the light has already shined to make truth more plain. The mass of Christian people must be gently and helpfully led by those whose duty and privilege it is to tally action more and more with truth.

Let us look once again at our Bible, our written word, our New Testament, with a readiness to deal with *the whole* of it in the way which God has shown and still shows a written word demands. In this further look our thought is chiefly on how to *interpret* the word.

So looking we find that *freedom* in the use of the Book is not only the warrant of reason but the practice of devout men of God.

1. Every sacred book, be it Old Testament

or New, be it Gospel or Epistle,—a human thing written in a language and with a style—every book has a parentage partly earthly, partly heavenly.

The earthly must gradually be put in the background, be, in the processes of translation into language and into life, so subordinated as to well nigh disappear, save as drapery. Not merely must we give up in our Bibles as of permanent obligation such crude conceptions of a preparatory dispensation as the destruction of the Canaanites and the imprecatory Psalms, on moral grounds; such false notions of date and authorship as have been tacked on to books and chapters by an unscholarly age, and made the test of a rising or falling religion, on critical grounds; but certain accepted interpretations, certain treasured Christian doctrines, founded, at least in phraseology, on temporary, fleeting and unworthy conceptions, must go too as partaking of the earthly element. However interwoven as part and parcel of a cherished scheme of salvation, however deemed essential to my

own faith as that by which I mounted, their value for all men and all time must be freely questioned and rejected if found wanting. Christ boldly threw aside such of the Old Testament as was un-Christian in fulfilling the law, did away with the perishing elements, pronounced, with His "but I say unto you," distinct condemnation on what Moses had said to them of old time. So the Christian must discard, under guidance of the Spirit, whatever of the *New Testament* is un-Christian. The New Testament writers themselves manifested a courage we may well emulate as they broke away from what they had been trained to revere. Some grave clothes of a dead faith still cling about their Christianity. "The primitive Gospel is not in its form, but only in its spirit, the Everlasting Gospel."* The Religion of a Book must use its book *as a book*. What is more sacred to a people than a written constitution? In its interpretation changes pass with

* James Martineau.

each age, adapting its words to conditions, till, while the principle survives, external action may quite contravene its letter. We are told that Japan has both an unwritten constitution like England and a written constitution like America, the latter interpreting the former for the necessities of each age.*

2. The use of the Old Testament by New Testament writers, by the early Christians, by Christ Himself, exhibits this freedom of interpretation which is a distinct even if unavowed separation and retention of a permanent value, quite apart from the literal and primary meaning of the passage in hand. Reverenced as the Old Testament was by the Jews and early Christians, perhaps beyond any feeling entertained at present for the whole Bible, such reverence permitted the freest treatment of the material. We have hardly begun to study, much less to realize and approve, the methods adopted by Christ and Apostolic men in dealing

*Baron Kantaro, *Century*, July, 1904.

with *their* word of God. Their treatment of the text of the Old Testament Scriptures, now as literal, now as allegorical, now as a motto or only a catch word, has yet to be systematically studied and made the basis for a like fearlessness linked with a riper discernment. We may neither praise nor follow their example till we have caught some of the exaltation that found such truth and value in the old written word.

So Jesus uses His Scriptures. He quotes their poetry as illustration; their devotional language to strengthen Himself in the presence of trial; their literary and historic treasure to defend His own claims and to answer His adversaries. He found comfort in His inherited familiarity with their language. He took grateful refuge, as did the men of His time, and as do the men of the Orient to-day, in the phrase, "It is written." Yet at His touch that written word glowed with new and unsuspected power. He passes by with disapproval the unfit; He lifts to spiritual levels the morally neutral; He retains, uses, hands on, the serviceable in that

written word. He cherished while he criticised that sacred literature which as a whole had made for righteousness; and drew distinctions between Moses' legislation for the hardness of men's hearts and the visions of David and Isaiah, whose Scripture was at His coming fulfilled in the hearers' ears. Sharing, as He did, the reverence of an early age for the mystery of written words, He handled those written words as symbols of invisible realities.* Later Christian interpreters, even St. Paul himself, as the mystical in him was under less restraint, carried this free handling of Scripture to an extreme which empties the word of all its original significance.

We may not wisely make these allegorizing methods our own, save in secondary and illustrative ways. The abuse of the original text to serve as heading for anything one wants to preach brings into discredit the use of any text

* Hatch. *Influence of Greek Ideas upon the Christian Church*. Lecture III.

Peters. *Old Testament and New Scholarship*. 57 ff.

at all—let not the preacher bolster his vagaries by a pretended and traditional Scriptural support. We may not treat the written Scripture as Paul treated the Scripture of his reverence, or as the Master treated the written word of them of old time, because of change in literary attitude and critical conception. But we may dare use as much freedom as they in dealing with a word which is seen by us even more clearly to be mingled with error. There is no revelation from God how to use His word. Inspired men are seen using the inspired word with the freedom of sons. *God is found*, in His word, speaking with manifold voices, after manifold fashions. The message that is to last is heard dimly at first, coming out more clear from the confusion of temporary voices and methods of speech. The vision seen of a prophet with his spiritual eye, yet inadequately portrayed; the voice of God heard by an apostle with his inward ear, but recorded in hesitating and obscure language—these the listening heart must recover for itself, rescuing the eternal from out the perishing.

God blesses the unintelligent, even the superstitious use of Scripture, not because it is unintelligent, but because of its spiritual eagerness. In blessing, He looks at the heart. But a man cannot plead a right purpose of heart if he is playing false to the conviction of the head. A man cannot plead for his Scriptural methods the excuse of ignorance if in the rest of his intellectual life he has passed on to the stage of enlightenment. Nor may any Christian dare deny the value of progress, of civilization, of fuller truth, despite the difficulties such progress entails ; nor refuse to apply their discoveries to his greatest treasure, the Holy Bible.

We are at least attaining to a less fragmentary view of the Scriptures. We are finding their message, not in detailed prophecy fulfilled, but in a divine purpose pervading the whole record and surviving its incompleteness. We no longer bulwark some cruel theological proposition by a proof text wrested from its context in the book of Ecclesiastes. Harmonists are not needed to save the faith by reconciling con-

traditions in Gospel narratives. We are not troubled that one of the synoptists was mistaken in detail of time or place. Such ignorance or error was part of the temporary method of a gospel given at first orally or catechetically, of the impression made on different hearers and varying responsiveness. Crystallized into writing the errors stand out conspicuous, yet they have no importance for him who is listening for the voice of the Master whom the narrative enshrines.

V. Told all these things and believing them ; told that the creation stories of the Old Testament are ancient myths purified ; that the patriarchs were not persons ; that much of the law was ascribed to Moses from later days ; that Old Testament history was written for his own purpose, now by a prophet, now by a priest ; that there are questionable books in the canon, that many books are not authentic, that Bible writers were mistaken ; that even Jesus' words have been worked over, consciously or unconsciously, by the Evangelists—what, we ask, in cumulative

alarm, what remains of God's word for God's people?

Let me tell you what remains, with a confidence not in the details of my answer, but in its larger accuracy. What remains as the message of the Holy Bible?

The sacred story of beginnings; set in a frame work of phraseology and figure universal among early peoples, but freed from all grossness, touched with an indescribable moral and religious power; a marvelous picture of great moral experiences, as in the story of Cain and Abel—man's responsibility for his fellow, no escape from God or from conscience.

Abraham, the embodiment of the Jewish ideal of manhood; an historical background but gathering to himself besides the noble deeds and traits of centuries; no less real because idealized, as Arthur is no less England's hero than Alfred.

Figure after figure growing plainer and more human, with the keen interest of biography, not fearful of infirmities in their portrayal; figures

to look at and gauge one's self by, and hear God speaking with His children—Jacob and Joseph and Joshua, David and Job and Isaiah.

Moses, founder of a nation, creator of a people out of separated and suspicious tribes, the motive power of the union a religious one.

That religion kept alive through dark and reactionary times, a trust for the world, the religion of one, holy God.

Aspiration and communion by psalmists singing human needs and human hopes, in words unequalled and inimitable, as true an expression of man's faith and trust when he looks up to God to-day as when uttered two thousand years ago.

Facing, by men of thought and life-discipline, of hard questions answered after varied fashions, in the Wisdom literature of Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Job.

Witnesses for righteousness before tyranny and lust by the prophets, men and messengers of God.

The words of the Master such as never man

spake; the life of the Incarnate without confession of sin or recall of act; the sacred Figure moving among men in time, centering the gaze of the ages.

Simple peasants and fishermen becoming saints of the world; a Jew of provincial Tarsus setting his eye on Rome to conquer her for Christ; known, remembered, listened to where voices of the poets and scholars of their time are long forgotten.

The record of all this our inspiration, comfort, wonder, joy; the Holy Scriptures; the Word of God.

That is what is left. Do we want something more, something better? Do we want authorship proved, prose in place of poetry, scientific facts, a narrative finished but barren and powerless? Do we want any other treasure than that we have, to be cherished, to be studied, to discover its gold from the necessary and preserving elements of alloy?

We pass, with the next two lectures, into the heart of our subject, the *contents* of the New

Testament Revelation : in one lecture the person of Christ, the temporary and permanent incident to an incarnation ; in another the teachings of Christ, the temporary clothing, in methods of expression, in current association of ideas, of eternal truth. Let us pray for grace to discover and to recognize the Son of the Father in Jesus of Nazareth, the eternal Word in the words spoken.

* * * * *

The eloquent passage in the peroration of Dean Milman's *Latin Christianity*, quoted by Robert Edward Bartlett in his *Bampton lectures* may be fittingly appended to this lecture. "What distinctions of conception, what precision of language may be indispensable to true faith ; what part of the ancient dogmatic system may be allowed silently to fall into disuse, as at least superfluous, and as beyond the range of human thought and human language ; how far the sacred records may, without real peril to their truth, be subjected to closer investigation ; to what wider interpretation, especially of the Semitic portion, those records may submit, and wisely submit, in order to harmonize them with

the irrefutable conclusions of science; how far the Eastern vale of allegory which hangs over their truth may be lifted or torn away to show their unshadowed essence; how far the poetic vehicle through which truth is conveyed may be gently severed from the truth;—all this must be left to the future historian of our religion. As it is my own confident belief that the words of Christ, and His words alone, shall not pass away; so I cannot presume to say that men may not attain to a clearer, at the same time more full and comprehensive and balanced sense of those words, than has as yet been generally received in the Christian world.”*

* Bartlett. *The Letter and the Spirit*, 204.

LECTURE III.

THE TEMPORARY AND THE PERMANENT IN THE INCARNATION.

THE Man is behind the Book : the Man of whom the Book is record ; the longing that He come, the need for Him, His appearance in the flesh, the witness to Him of the Apostles and the newborn church. The Incarnate One, the Word made Flesh, shares the characteristics of the Written Word in that He needs translation and interpretation, His permanent Person to be discovered for man out from its temporary vesture.

I. The Incarnation is becoming the centering fact of Christian thought and hope. In the Incarnation man is brought face to face with his God for cleansing and for inspiration. God is seen in Jesus Christ.

The historical and the spiritual, the human and the divine are brought together in one em-

bodiment in the Incarnation. For permanent value to man they must be separated anew, at least in thought.

Jesus Christ lived at a certain time, in a certain place, of a certain people. The Incarnation was, and must be, an appearing in a specific human nature. Every man must be individual man as well, if he be real man. "As empirical the person is a unit; as transcendental he belongs to a whole, and thinks in the terms of the universal. As empirical he is a creature of time and space, comes of a given race, is born at a given time in a given place to a given family, inherits a given past, is fashioned by a given present, and is a factor of a given future; but as transcendental, his affinities are all with the eternal, and all his work is for it."* Race, family, place, time, education and opportunity are essential factors in the life of the natural man. If the supernatural be also represented in him, it is through the conflict of these two views of the one person "that

* Fairbairn. *Philosophy of the Christian Religion*, 308, 311.

the simple story of a humble and beautiful life is turned into the supreme drama of history."

That union of the historical and spiritual, of the human and divine in the Incarnation, is both its glory and its difficulty. It summons to discrimination. The result of that discrimination is man's greatest treasure.

Just because of that in the Incarnation which makes it the revelation to man of God's nature and of God's way of salvation, namely, the touch on man himself of the divine, must it also wrap up that divine within human folds. By these perceptible, perishable garments the divine is discovered, made our own. The divine is retained and held on to as its several human garments are allowed for and ignored. So the drapery of a parable, furnishing its attraction for the reader, forms no parts of its lesson.

Jesus: a son of Judah, a son of Mary, a son of Nazareth, a son of the First Century: in all these found to be Son of God. These apparent relationships do not exhaust what He was, yet with these we must begin. Christianity is

first a child of its age ; so much the more noteworthy its differences from its age. It inherited temporary and unworthy traditions ; it was in danger of crystallizing some of these into permanency ; perhaps some have been crystallized and need resifting. The Master, too, was human, " and with the divine intuitions of his mind were inevitably mingled undivine traditions of his country and his time." *

The ever fresh problem for Christian study, the characteristic problem of Christianity as God's fullest revelation of Himself, is this union of the historical and the spiritual. Does the Incarnation detract from or add to the value of Christianity as a religion for man ? Have we something in the Word made Flesh to explain away or to rejoice over ? Why ! it is the fact and truth that gives Christianity at once its beauty and its power. That the difficulties involved summon to exercise the high faculty of discrimination is tribute to the nature of man

* Martineau. *Seat of Authority in Religion.* 325.

for whose salvation the Son of God took that nature as His own. Answering this question as we must answer it, that the Incarnation is the glorious truth of our Christian faith, though it involve things hard to receive and hard to explain, we must accept its conditions and address ourselves to their solution.

The Christ of history becomes for each of us the Christ of experience, both of them the expression of God's love seen in the face of His dear Son. The Kerr lectures for 1897, delivered by Dr. David W. Forrest, bear title, *The Christ of History and of Experience*. At the outset the apparent inconsistency is strongly put between an immediate realization of Christ's presence in the soul and a faith requiring intellectual appreciation of an historic person. "Religion, it is said, is a spiritual experience, the right relation of the soul to God; and yet, this right relation is made dependent on the belief of what took place hundreds of years ago." The reconciliation of this apparent inconsistency is at once the problem and the power of

the Christian religion. In his eighth lecture, *The Relation of the Spiritual to the Historical in Christian Faith*, Dr. Forrest puts their reconciliation as not incongruous, but characteristic of all man's highest acts. Outward testimony and inward sight must always go together for any complete moral work in man. "Historical belief is a constant factor in determining all our ideas of duty." Man's beliefs and resolves "are determined very largely by the attitude which he assumes towards persons and incidents of bygone times, of whose reality he is convinced through the witness of others." The soul longing for deliverance and fellowship with God may say, Just the message I need is the story of one who lived a stainless life, gave that life in others' behalf, rose from the dead, ever liveth to give forgiveness and renewal to those who give themselves to Him. "How can I be sure that Jesus Christ was actually such a one? A link is wanting to unite the historic Jesus and the Church's interpretation of Him. *The Gospels are that link.*" The Gospels give us a picture that, with

all our questioning and wonder, is its own best argument. It is of "a humanity which transcends itself and yet remains human." This is no dream of the idealist, no fiction of the philosopher. It is the Figure of our hope and of our need. It is this fact on which experience may fasten, this blending of the outward and the inward, which is Christianity's unique and transcendent gift. "It is exactly this direct touch with the historical Jesus which the simplest Christian knows to lie at the root of his confidence. There are times when his own experience of Christ's presence seems to falter, and when even the testimony of Christian hearts and lives around him fails to reassure him. He is haunted by the fear that they, like himself, may be swayed too much by moods and fond imaginings, and he is only restored by the sense of an indubitably real Christ speaking to him out of the Gospels." * That historic Master, the

* Forrest. *The Christ of History and of Experience*. Chap. VIII, passim.

incarnate Son of God, is to be seen, is to be heard as Master and Teacher for to-day through a translating medium which shall eliminate the passing to retain the abiding features.

We must then read and study the story of the Incarnation. We must not come to it with a prior conception of what the Incarnate God ought to be. "It is as illegitimate to argue that He must have observed common prayer because He was a man, as that He must have known the day and hour of the last judgment because He was the Son of God. The doctrine of the Incarnation is essentially an induction from facts."* These facts must be known and weighed quite apart from any abstract notions. If God and man were in union it was an unique phenomenon, one for whose manifestations no other experience has prepared us. We must read the story and draw for ourselves the new picture it gives us. Jesus Christ of the Gospels must tell us what God is like.

* Forrest. *The Christ of History and of Experience*, 481.

As the Figure grows clearer, as the concept of God becomes more defined, our appreciative intelligence must allow for and drop off the inevitable human accessories of God incarnate.

This eliminating process must not be too sudden, or too radical, losing for us the historical Jesus altogether. We spin our fancies about a divine being, then open our Bibles to find Him much more like ourselves. A pious bishop of the Middle Ages prayed earnestly that it might be revealed to him what Jesus did in His boyhood. Then the bishop dreamed a dream. He saw a carpenter at his work and a boy helping him. Then the mother set porridge on the table and bade them eat. And the bishop was watching behind the door. Then said the boy, "Shall not the man also eat with us?" A truer revelation of the divine character this than invented infancy-miracles and aureolas.

Yet the recorded story, while it reveals, does not exhaust His nature. Else were Christianity local, the religion of an oriental master. The Church has been entrusted by the records of the

Gospel with a Message and a Lord of much larger embrace than its first reading or interpretation realized. Jesus is not limited by the race and age to which He was born. All other saints and sages, marked with characteristics their own admire, are objects of aversion or disapproval to peoples of alien training. "Jesus is the only oriental that the Occident has admired with an admiration that has become worship. His is the only name the West has carried into the East which the East has received and praised and loved with sincerity and without qualification."* "It is easy," writes Bartlett in his Bampton lectures, "to assign too much importance to the temporary element in the Christian Gospel. For, though Christ was called the Son of David, though He was descended from Jewish ancestors and brought up amid Jewish surroundings, yet He was in a far truer and more characteristic sense the Son of Man." †

* Fairbairn. *The Philosophy of the Christian Religion*, 369.

† Bartlett. *The Letter and the Spirit*, 36.

The divine Christ emerges from the picture, naturally, surely, yet requiring the discerning mind not to read in Him as divine what were only necessary features of earth. The divine Christ is found within the historic Jesus. The study of the Christian Ages is the Person of Christ : to make Him real, neither losing from our facts the historical, nor falsifying our ideal of the divine. There is danger on either hand. We cannot wisely read *only* the Synoptists with their picture of One who went about doing good, nor yet the Gospel of St. John with its proclamation of the Word made Flesh. If the one is the primer and the other the advanced text-book of the Story of Jesus Christ, we need to read His story again and again as children to make real our conception as philosophers.

It may be asked, How far is it possible to rescue the permanent, considering the fragmentary nature of the material of the Gospels? They are not a full and orderly presentation of the life of Jesus Christ ; they are rather collections of His sayings and His doings made with

a purpose, either catechetical for Christian life, or demonstrative for Christian faith. Yet in their very simplicity and honesty they have been found wonderfully effective in the portrayal of their matchless Figure. They have proved capable of adaptation to the comprehension and needs of all sorts and conditions of men, of races of every training and attainment. The missionary to our own churchless and Christless fellow-citizens, as to the heathen in all stages of ignorance and sin, has a like task to that unto which we are addressing ourselves, to discover and make real from the story of Jesus in the old Gospels the divine Christ, Master and Lord for all the world. The task, to be complete, requires both scholarship and devoutness, each of them open-minded. We must fall back at last for satisfaction over our conclusions, as in all other processes involving moral assurance, on the inner witness. This is only to say under another form that a man must be a good man if he would know God. If a son of peace be there Christ's peace shall rest upon him.

II. These considerations—the Incarnate God appearing in time and place, His story told in a record human like His own manifestation—have both a theological and a practical bearing.

1. Theological. The temporary conditions of the Incarnation influence our thinking, our theological conception of Christ.

Whatever our attitude may be toward what is technically known as the Kénosis, Christian Theology must hold certain positions having an affinity with the kenotic idea. In some sense, Christ in the Incarnation “emptied Himself,” in part or for a time, of attributes or activities belonging to His unveiled divinity. We are wiser to hold on to the *principle* of some such laying aside of powers, the necessity thereof involved in the very fact of God becoming truly man, the comfort and the help to our humanity in such condescension, than to try to dogmatize on its corollaries.

Some temporary features of an incarnation may be affirmed in general as unquestionably true. These have a deep effect on our thinking

as we face the fact of God Incarnate, though our minds be unable to follow to the end all which they involve. The divinity of Christ must be championed as a reality rather than as a notion ; as it lifts the level of our living and aspiration more than because it furnishes something to argue for.

First : The Incarnate Christ laid aside the metaphysical attributes of the divine nature.

When we look at Christ, read His story, see His life, we see divinity, but we see it shorn of omnipresence, omnipotence, eternity. We see it with what may be called the essential attributes at least put in the background.

Man looking at God, looking for God, must look with human eyes, must approach divinity from the man-side, as He is pictured in the human Gospel story. Human eyes cannot see the all-mighty, cannot compass the omnipresent. Herein the very reason for the Incarnation. If God is to be known as a reality, He must manifest Himself to eye of sense. Eye of sense cannot behold the infinite.

Metaphysical attributes would not give God to man, never have revealed Him. They are abstractions, they cannot be made concrete to man's apprehension. Try to picture, to present, eternity. It cannot be done. The conception cannot be grasped. If grasped at all it is not valued, has no touch on man to change either his character or his ideas, leaves him wide-eyed and dumb. God must come out of eternity into time; must leave omnipresence for locality; must drop omnipotence for infancy and youth, for food and sleep.

It is no miracle that *God* be everywhere, be invisible, hold all power in His hand—for God is spirit. The incarnate Jesus, by the very fact that the Word in Him became flesh ceases to exercise these essential attributes of the Godhead. The incarnation is no assuming of a part on the stage of an artificial world; it is a real entering into our human nature.

This is not to deny God's essential attributes, nor even to fail in realizing that they belong to God as God. But their existence in Him is

reached by a process of reasoning. They are truths deduced from what we see, are not characteristics seen in themselves. The articles of the Creed, so far as they are other than the affirmation of the facts of the Gospel story, are truths reached by intellectual struggle, conquered for itself, through a great process of elimination, by the faith of the Church. Each generation must in a measure repeat that process for its own soul life, must find the eternal God through His human revelation in Jesus. Else the Incarnation was only of value for the day of Jesus' human life. Else we in our day are willing and able to forego that approach to the knowledge of God found necessary through all the travail-pangs which preceded Christ's coming, and conquered for mankind through generations of struggle since His day. We are *not* willing to fail our part in victory won for truth by effort. We cannot find God, for ourselves, as a heritage bequeathed us; can find Him only as the Son takes us, too, by the hand and leads us into His presence. To approach God by the Creed-side,

to begin our knowledge of Him by the affirmations of the Creeds to which we compel ourselves to bow, is to miss the purpose of the Incarnation; is to forswear for ourselves the duty laid upon man by his nature to reach truth eternal by hardness.

Jesus Christ, in His Incarnation, revealed God apart from the metaphysical attributes which belong to our idea of Him as eternal.

Second: Christ's knowledge was limited in the Incarnation.

It is His own affirmation that there are facts He does not know, facts belonging only to the Father, not the Father's will that they be shared with His son in His day of earth. He becomes man in that He questions for information, that He marvels, that He is amazed, that He is troubled in spirit, that He hopes against hope. Once again, and earnestly, I repeat, these feelings are not assumed, any more than the human nature of Christ is assumed, as a dramatic spectacle. Men are not to be impressed by the life and death of Jesus Christ as they are impressed

by a play, however tremendous may be the power of the stage. The life of the Incarnate One, His feelings, His pains, His hopes, His disappointments, His growth in mind and spiritual plans, are just as real as the experiences of any human life we know ; are just as real as is God's existence and God's wonderful nature ; are standards of reality for man as man looks, on the one part, at his wondrous self, on the other part at his God in whose image he has been made.

It is no impeachment of Christ's divinity, seeing that divinity had consented to tabernacle in the flesh, that He should not know what man can never know without study, without acquiring the knowledge.

There is no evidence that Jesus knew higher mathematics or the existence of America, no reason why He should know these and like difficult questions either of reasoning or discovery, no methods by which He could properly become familiar with them. He contented Himself with the scientific and secular attainment of

His time. The concession of this fact would save Christian reading of the Gospels and Christian interpretation of their difficulties from many an unnecessary and humiliating experience. There is an unawareness to be allowed for in the Incarnate Christ which, while it helps to explain Him, constitutes, I may say, a necessary feature of His Incarnation and one that brings Him closer not only to our understanding, but to our sympathy. "Not having come into the world to teach science, He contented Himself with the opinions He had inherited with the rest of His people, and which constituted the science of nature of His little popular environment, without concerning Himself as to whether these opinions were erroneous or correct." *

It may help us both to believe and to value this concession of ignorance in the Incarnation, to remember that it is in harmony with God's wisdom as we see it elsewhere. God never

* Sabatier. *Outlines of a Philosophy of Religion*, 74-5

gives a man without study the knowledge of facts and truths for whose acquisition He has endowed him with capacities. However supremely necessary the knowledge of the Chinese language to the missionary, he must learn how to preach the Gospel in their own tongue to that people by years of painful application. What a converting power that a missionary should stand forth the first day of his coming and tell the story of Christ in a correct vernacular! *It is not God's way*, nor would it be wise to empty duty of hardship. Whatever the nature of the Gift of Tongues there is no evidence that the first Apostles were able in their missionary journeys to preach the Gospel to foreign peoples without an interpreter. In our reading of the Gospel to-day there are always alternatives of interpretation, one of which a man may take to his error. God does not *compel* either the acceptance or the appreciation of truth. He summons man to exercise freely, and to the utmost of his power, the gifts of acquisition and of discernment He has bestowed upon him. To

hold that Jesus had a reserved knowledge of all facts and truths, a treasury of learning to draw upon which He had not Himself filled, a capacity to call out the mysteries of geography and history and natural science from a store-house of divinity, is to discredit God's wise way of educating His children, under plea of fancied loyalty to His Son sent into the world.

The story of Jesus' life for the thirty years before His ministry, brief as is the record, conveys the unequivocal impression of a growth, a development. He increased in wisdom, as in stature. He came to Himself. He grew into self-consciousness by the gradual discipline and training of life, as well as by occasional marked and epochal experiences. The weekly service in the synagogue of the town where He had been brought up, the carpenter's bench and the lily-studded fields ministered to the growing realization of His mission as much as did the talk with the doctors in the temple at the age of twelve and the crowning baptism by Jordan at the age of thirty. What He knew of the text

of the Old Testament, of the history of His people, He had to acquire by study. For the consciousness in the blossoming life from babyhood to manhood, that he was the Messiah of God, that He was the revealer of the divine will and sharer of the divine nature, He had to wait upon God with all His faculties alert to learn and to appropriate. He came to the realization of His divine nature and mission no otherwise than we learn what we are and what we are to do, by studying facts and mastering experiences within and without. He was a revelation first to Himself, then He revealed to mankind the wondrous things He had discovered. The Gospel did not drop from the sky, it was not sent by an angel; Jesus was born from the very bosom of the human race, and Jesus gave us the Gospel that had blossomed in His inmost heart.* So every man, with a message and a mission, is first a self-discoverer, then a revealer to others. Strange how we admit this early ignorance and

* Sabatier. *Outlines of a Philosophy of Religion*, 57.

gradual self-discovery everywhere as a fact, and hesitate to use it as an interpretive principle! It is the business of thoughtful Christian men to bring theories into harmony with facts, and so to make God's revelation more real. In the Incarnation Jesus was ignorant of much secular knowledge, learned as man learns, came to Himself even in His divine inheritance.

But such a limitation in the knowledge of our Lord's human mind, inherent in the Incarnation, forms no hindrance to His moral unity with His Father.

For, third: The Moral Attributes of God are undiminished in the Incarnation.

From the first dawning of moral consciousness in Jesus there was a perfect harmony between His will and the will of His Father. That harmony with God is goodness: its perfection is a partaking of that in the divine nature which alone marks God off as worthy of man's unstinted love and worship; which alone, by contrast with gods many and lords many,

reveals Him as the Father of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, man's Heavenly Father, the Holy God. Union with God brings, is, holiness ; it is not necessarily scientific learning.

There is no need that God's moral attributes be lost in the Incarnation, that they even be under eclipse from earth's standards of goodness, or put out of sight for a time by earth's limitations. Goodness in man is just the same thing as goodness in God. It is harmony with God's will. That may appear at the earliest moment when that will is seen and known. In a being with whom such harmony has been the earliest possible choice goodness is not acquired by study. Christianity's secret is Christ's relation to His Father. Christ's intellectual outlook is not ours ; ours may surpass His. Christ's religious outlook is eternal. In that religious realm, the harmony of holy will, God's essential and moral attributes meet ; perfection is possible in the Incarnation.

The Sinlessness of Christ is our priceless treasure. In studying that we need no separa-

tion between the temporary and the permanent. It is a positive, rather than a negative characteristic, best stated as moral perfection, an all-roundness in His Life. Individuals, nations, religionists stand for some one virtue; "the saints of the East would not be canonized in the West, while the qualities which the cultured West most admires the civilized East holds in disdainful contempt."* There is in Christ a balance, a proportion, at once difficult to conceive, to portray, and certainly to reproduce. The Evangelists had before them the difficult task of portraying a Figure that had never before been conceived, uniting in Himself attributes heretofore held to be contradictory. They have succeeded in picturing a simple and natural Person whom we at once recognize as a reality, yet all the time feel to be divine.

There is in Christ, as we read the story of His life, no repentance, no confession in prayer, no haunting doubts lest He has erred, no recall

* Fairbairn. *Philosophy of the Christian Religion*, 369. 352.

of uttered judgments. There is forgiveness of others, with no conscious need that He be forgiven Himself. The impression is so unique and compelling as to enlist the support of all apologists, Channing, Martineau, Bushnell, Bruce, as well as the most conventional champions of the faith. Bushnell's Tenth Chapter, "The Character of Jesus forbids His possible Classification with Men" is still a present-day classic on the claims of the Incarnate One. "Men undertake to be spiritual," I quote what is to me one of its most telling passages, "and they become ascetic; or, endeavoring to hold a liberal view of the comforts and pleasures of society, they are soon buried in the world, and slaves to its fashions; or, holding a scrupulous watch to keep out every particular sin, they become legal, and fall out of liberty; or, charmed with the noble and heavenly liberty, they run to negligence and irresponsible living; so the earnest become violent, the fervent fanatical and censorious, the gentle waver, the firm turn bigots, the liberal grow lax, the benevolent,

ostentatious. Poor human infirmity can hold nothing steady—the character of Christ is never modified, even by a shade of rectification. It is one and the same throughout. He makes no improvement, prunes no extravagances, returns from no eccentricities. The balance of his character is never disturbed, or readjusted, and the astounding assumption on which it is based is never shaken, even by a suspicion that he falters in it.” *

The virgin life is really the best evidence for the virgin birth. The question how Christ came into the world was a late one to be asked and answered, in the circle of early Christian believers. St. Paul does not seem to have asked it at all. “The Incarnation was for him a miraculous fact, whatever its mode.” On the prevailing disquietude over the virgin birth it may be said: that the stories of St. Matthew and St. Luke about Jesus’ birth are a fitting presentation of the origin of a sinless life; that a miracle

* Bushnell. *Nature and the Supernatural*, 288.

in the moral world is as difficult to comprehend as a miracle in the physical world; that new beings in God's creation demand new beginnings. For my own part, the story presents to me no exceptional or insurmountable difficulties. It has been felt, and gravely, that the virgin birth empties the Incarnation of vital significance and reality; this may be pronounced a theological rather than a religious difficulty. Yet of the Incarnation, as of the Atonement and the Inspiration of the Scripture, we are safe in holding that the fact is alone of supreme value, and the method of the fact secondary and speculative. The wisdom of the Church, by contrast with the sectarian spirit, has been not to dogmatize on methods, at least not to enforce her theories; rather to proclaim and to rejoice in the value of the facts of our religion. The fact of the Incarnation belongs to our permanent treasure of revelation; the details of its method and manifestation partake of those temporary features which each age must read and translate anew for itself.

These temporary, as contrasted with the permanent aspects of the Incarnation have also.

2. A Practical Bearing,

Our knowledge of God, our interpretation of His attitude toward man, our growth into His likeness, are all mediated through the Incarnation; as is our ability to discover what is abiding in Him, and for ourselves, out of His temporary manifestation in the world of His Children.

First: Our only satisfying knowledge of God is through Jesus Christ. "Jesus has for the Christian consciousness the religious value of God." If God be like Jesus then I can worship Him. Strip Jesus of the incidental and we have what we can embrace and love in God. "God is a spirit, and of what quality His spirit is the man Jesus declares. God is love, and what divine love means the ministry of Jesus in life and death shows. God is good in the specific sense of being gracious, generous, philanthropic, and the historic life of Jesus interprets for us the philanthropy of God. Knowledge of the historical Jesus is the foundation at once of

a sound Christian theology and of a thoroughly healthy Christian life." *

There is an unexpressed feeling of impatience that we cannot know God absolutely, cannot see goodness just as it is, apart from questions of money and clothes and food; cannot empty it of all the accessories whereby it is explained and exemplified. We know nothing of goodness apart from good persons; that is why we may not lose personality from God. We have no idea of goodness outside of good actions, and good actions use the means at their disposal. The endeavor to relegate goodness to the invisible, to the realm of pure spirit, is landing many in oriental and theosophic religions whose impeachment is not so much that they are untrue philosophy as that they have no answer to the questions, What good have you done, How have men that believe in your system or live within its influence been made better, What have you contributed to bringing in the kingdom of righteousness?

* Bruce. Apologetics, 350. Also *passim*.

The religion of the Incarnate brings men into touch with a God of reality, a God whose character they can feel, whose power they can make their own. The Incarnate Jesus is the point of contact between human weakness that would fain be better, and divine strength that is eager to impart itself. The Incarnate Jesus strips earthly terms of their perishable grossness, gives man a Father whose fatherhood is seen not in the mere fact of begetting but in the unfailing love and protecting care that has come to be the true idea of fatherhood.

In the Incarnation we find the apology for anthropomorphic language used in Scripture and in all religious utterance about God. If that God might be really known to man it were necessary that God take man's nature, wear man's clothes, eat man's food; then is it equally fitting and necessary that God be spoken of in man's language. To him who is able to see it, He lifts the language, is not degraded by it; even as He lifts the human form and makes it vehicle for the divine nature.

Anthropomorphic language is the bugbear of much skeptical criticism of the Bible. If God is to be spoken about or written about at all, it must be in language of men. A supernatural revelation cannot give us a supernatural terminology for religious use, any more than it can give us an angel from heaven to be our minister, or bring God out of heaven to sit at our table. If it were possible it would be useless: "if they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead." Nor would it be wise: "If God wished to make us a gift that we could receive, must He not have suited the form of it to that of our mind?" All human language is primarily material. This material language is put at once, under guidance of the imagination, at the service of poetry and legend. Through these God appears, speaking to the simple human heart. As men grow wiser, more spiritually apprehensive, they love poetry and legend no less, they hear the voice of God no less in the simpler forms of speech, but they come to find

the reality behind the figure, to discern the spiritual within the material, to be conscious that the things seen and heard are symbol and sacrament, for the uplifted vision, of things unseen and echoing on forever. "As if the divine spirit," writes Sabatier in one of his bursts of inspired rhetoric, "in order to be intelligible to the simple and the ignorant, could not as well avail Himself of the fictions of poetry as of logical reasonings, of the chants of the angels at Bethlehem as of the rabbinical exegesis and argumentations of the Apostle Paul. . . . And why so much disdain? Does not childhood run on into maturity and old age? What are our most abstract ideas but primitive metaphors which have been worn and thinned by usage and reflection?"* The invisible God must be declared to man's apprehension, to man's love, to man's responsiveness by the Incarnate Son.

Second: The reproduction of God's life in

* Sabatier. *Outlines of a Philosophy of Religion*, 37.

ourselves is made possible only by the Incarnation.

Not only does Jesus bring us to know God, He bids us be like God. An impressive section of the Sermon on the Mount has as its summary word. "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in Heaven is perfect."

The imitableness of God is found only in Christ. It is found only in those characteristics of God which appeared in the Incarnation. To such alone, as a possible "perfection," are men bidden in the text. We may not aim to be omnipresent—it would be not so much an absurdity as blasphemous presumption; we may aim to be long-suffering. When we look at God as seen in Christ, we may reverently say men are not so much unlike God save *as a fact*. "Made in the divine image" has new truth and new hope for us when we see that image in His Son. We come to realize the truth of the present-day philosophy that likeness is of more import than difference; that God in His goodness has much in common with man, when man

is represented by Jesus Christ. "Faith," says Professor Nash, "Faith is surrender to an impassioned belief in the unity of God and Christ and Man." Christ only reveals what man may be.

It is often asked, What would Christ do if He came to America, if He came to the Twentieth Century? The inference to be drawn from the question is what I ought to do in my place and my century as a Christ-man. The question is asked with an accent of condemnation on Christian discipleship, as well by Socialists who have no belief in the God of Christianity, as by Tolstoi who has a very esoteric belief in Him.

The right answer to this question involves the subject of these lectures, the relation of the temporary to the permanent in the Incarnation. Is the imitation of Christ to be literal or is it to eliminate temporary accidents? If God's Fullness of Time had come in our day, or in our America, how would Christ have come? Any honest answer, in our own heart or in audible speech, performs at once the separating process by which the abiding Christ is discovered from

the man of his age and people, by which the Eternal God is seen revealed in His unchanging attributes. Yet we have not the courage or the intelligence to speak out and make that separation without compulsion. We go on, in our interpretations and our exhortations, assuming that a peasant Jew of the first century is America's revelation of God; and that the American Christian in following Him, is in some way to reproduce that exact figure. And when we fail, as of course we do fail, we despairingly pronounce our Christianity to be at fault. We cannot all be peasants, carpenters, orientals, be unmarried and itinerant. We may not wear Christ's turban or sandals or flowing robe: wearing these, we may, even so, fail to wear the changeless garment of His character. We may put on His clothes and not put on His mind. To wear His raiment and to talk His language, as it has failed to retain His true discipleship in the land of His birth, so may it absorb and satisfy with externals those who in far off lands and distant ages can only recover and transmit Him by clothing themselves with His spirit.

Of the many books I have had in hand in the preparation of these lectures, none has been more illuminating, no one would I more earnestly commend for your painstaking study and use, than *Atonement and Personality* by Canon Moberly. His argument closely reasoned and widely illustrated, is, in a word, that personality is the keynote for an intelligent understanding of all great spiritual experiences. To personality, in God, in man, in Christ who brings God and man into relations; to personality, with whose vital characteristics we are intuitively familiar, he refers, with absolute originality and clearness, the fundamental moral facts of punishment, penitence, forgiveness, mediation, atonement. In two striking pages Moberly turns the light of his truth on the appeal to men to correct their standard by the standard of Christ, and walk always and only in His steps. "In the first place," he writes, "there are a vast number of situations in life, which constitute the most perplexing of practical problems, in which it is not compatible with a reverend conception of

His Person, to conceive of Him as placed. It was wholly incompatible with the nature of the work which He came on earth to do, that He should have been within the scope of matrimonial responsibilities or anxieties, or should have been closely identified with party politics, or should have initiated a great commercial enterprise, or should have been a successful general, or should have dominated the public press. All these things are good ; and a score of others, of which these are but samples, are also good ; but it is levity of mind, not religious reverence, which will conceive of Him as directly conditioned by them. He is indeed a standard to all these ; but the standard cannot be applied with any rough and ready directness of method. And, in the second place, if we ask ourselves * * * what His apostles and saints would have done in conditions which are not so hopelessly incongruous to *them* ; (which is, in fact, the same thing as asking, in the only reverent form, what it would perfectly beseem the Christ-spirit to do) we have still to beware of rough and ready ans-

wers. * * * We are not helped, but hindered, in our search for what is right, by the crude attempt to imitate, across all gulfs of intervening difference, the precise things which He did * * * He would have done that which is the absolutely wisest and best. When we know what is absolutely wisest and best, we shall know what He would have done. But we are far more likely to find what He would have done, by learning dutifully what is wisest and best ; than to discover, by a short cut, what is wisest and best, through asking what He would have done, and presuming, in all the crudeness of spiritual indiscipline, to give off-hand, perhaps in biblical phraseology, a wholly unjust and superficial answer." * In no other words, that I have met or could frame, is the inherent temporary character of much of the revelation of the Incarnation so strongly put. They summon us, from the pen of a recognized master, to essay the task and privilege of rescuing and commending the permanent.

The Human Christ is the Figure of the Gos-

* Atonement and Personality. R. C. Moberly. 308-9.

pels. We may approach Christ from two sides. The old approach is from above : from the creeds ; from theology ; from St. Paul struggling with language adequate to express his own experience ; from St. John telling the ripened conviction of sixty years intimacy and discipleship ; from God's gift out from His own bosom. The new approach is from below : from the Gospel of going about doing good ; from the faltering faith of men and women who followed where they could not understand ; from the beauty and power of *one Life* lived on the earth which neither distance, nor inadequacy of portrayal, nor unworthiness in following can ever lose from the world's admiring gaze. Both approaches bring us to God. The approach by the way of Christ's humanity makes every step a reality and a progress, and leaves us worshipping in the presence of One whom we know and love and count our own. He who has grace to discern the Lord in the humble Jesus of Nazareth has found God in his *heart*. The utmost precision on the doctrine of God Incarnate may leave us with only an *intellectual* abstraction.

Do not misunderstand me. Here is no denial that the Gospel, the New Testament, the Savior, is a gift from above. Our apprehension of Him must be from below. We must draw near to Jesus and see; the more we look the more wonderful He appears, the more we realize that what we see does not exhaust what He is; that our temporary avenues of approach are highways leading to God Himself. To dehumanize Jesus is to forfeit the value of the Incarnation. Seeing Him as man, learning His way and His nature in His manhood, He stands out more clearly and truly as God. The Divinity of our Lord, as the divinity of the Scriptures, comes out more radiant when approached from the human side. The better His temporary and earthly features are known the more are they felt unequal to explaining Him, the more is He seen to transcend the temporary, to belong to man for all time as God's eternal revelation of Himself.

In the next lecture we listen to Christ's word, *The Temporary and the Permanent in Christ's Teaching.*

LECTURE IV.

THE TEMPORARY AND THE PERMANENT IN CHRIST'S TEACHING.

I. A PROMINENT factor in the Incarnation is Christ's teaching.

It is not the foremost factor. Christ is not primarily a Teacher. His Person is what exceptionally claims our attention. What He is must ultimately explain what He teaches. There has been a movement in Christian discipleship in the past century to rest its cause on the sayings of Jesus. To reach these the story of developing Christian life and Christian thought in Acts and Epistles has been passed by, even belittled. Back to the words of the Master is a winning watchword to a faithful disciple. It may miss the Master's supreme characteristic, His Person. Of that Person disciples and apostles may be truer witnesses than even His own

words which have come down to us. To disparage the writings of St. Paul in the interest of the Gospels may be to miss the Gospel's unique revelation. It is an attractive summons, that the Christian confines himself to the study of the words of Christ; an enlightened Christianity recognizes in St. Paul a familiarity with the Master's *full* figure no sayings of His earthly ministry can disclose. "Christ's supremacy over His followers does not lie in the fact that He uttered deeper truths of God than they, but that He alone manifested in His own person the eternal Sonship. Paul enters into no absurd rivalry with Him as a teacher. Christ's life was more than His teaching. Paul's teaching was higher than his life."*

Yet the world comes back to Christ's teaching as its precious inheritance. It treasures and counts over every word. It is eager at the possible discovery, in some long hidden manuscript, of another saying of Jesus. It addresses itself,

* Forrest. The Christ of History and Experience, 332.

both its scholarship and its faith, to a study of that saying, its authenticity, its meaning, the light it sheds on His other sayings, on His character. The study of any one saying, old or new, is not simple. Even in the teachings of Jesus there are inevitable difficulties, requiring a discrimination of values.

We have seen, in the last lecture, that in the Incarnation there must of necessity be temporary features. These arise from the human aspects of an incarnation ; its necessary relationship to race and family, to time and place, to training and opportunity. The eternal Christ of the world's appropriation must emerge from the Christ of history.

These temporary features inhering in Christ's incarnation are most distinctively true of His teaching, of his *spoken* life. That teaching was in a given language, addressed to hearers, employing the current style, using familiar figures, adapting itself to its environment, handed on by the appropriating receptivity of those who heard Him. Jesus was not merely, as Matthew Arnold says,

“above the heads of His reporters.” He remains above the capacity of each generation to interpret Him. The best comprehension of one age is a moral offence to another. The words must be read and sifted anew, separated not only from the local conditions of their first utterance, but from the misconceiving comments that have relocalized them in the generations since.

There are sayings of Jesus that trouble enlightened Christian apprehension, not so much to understand or even to apply in practice, as to reconcile with the ideal of Himself He has formed in us, becoming our Lord. There are words of His that do not, as they stand, help our Christian discipleship, words we wish were not there, words we feel constrained to explain away. The key at once to the difficulty and its removal is found, I am confident, in an honest sifting out from Christ’s teaching of inevitable temporary elements.

Yet it must be acknowledged on the threshold that Christ’s teaching is exceptionally free from

temporary characteristics. If we can ascertain Jesus' mind, that is truth for us; to ascertain His mind, we must translate His words.

Three stages mark Christ's teaching: the stage of apothegm, condensed and popular utterance of truth, as in the Sermon on the Mount; the stage of parable, truth pictured in a story, to be found by searching; the stage of elaborated discourse, a sort of meditation on His mission, found for the most part in St. John's Gospel, and taking color from John's own sixty years' meditation on his loved Master. In each of these styles are temporary features, largely belonging to oriental methods of speech. Yet for that very reason in part, as picturesquely and predominantly ethical, the form assumed is attractive to hearers of every age and clime.

"One of the prominent characteristics of Jesus' words," says Stalker, "is pregnancy. No other speaker ever put so much into few words. Yet the matter is not too closely packed; all is simple, limpid, musical. * * * It is when truth has been long and thoroughly pon-

dered that it embodies itself in brief and memorable language; * * * and such intense and convinced thought was so habitual to Jesus that the most striking sayings were often coined by Him on the spur of the moment, as when he said in controversy, 'Render unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's, and unto God the things which are God's'. * * * No other words have adhered as those of Jesus to the memory of mankind. Let almost any of His sayings be commenced, and the ordinary hearer can without difficulty finish the sentence. But, if we can retain them so easily since they have been written, the first hearers could remember them as easily before they were written." *

Yet, were Jesus' teaching wholly freed from temporary features it would be with the loss of the historic Christ. To the study of these temporary characteristics in the teachings of Christ, that we may preserve the true gold of His message to all time, we give ourselves in this lecture.

* Stalker. *The Christology of Jesus*, 38-39.

Some general considerations on Christ's teaching in its temporary and permanent aspects must first engage our attention. Then we will study specific sayings of Christ to see how they illustrate these considerations and give us the permanent truth.

II. Some general considerations on Christ's Teaching in its temporary and permanent aspects.

1. Christ's teaching had an intelligible meaning for His immediate hearers.

This is but an honest, common-sense thing to say about the words of a true man. Mystical and allegorical interpretations of Old Testament stories and New Testament conversations, as the *only interpretations possible*, empty the words of any original reality or seriousness.

Jesus spoke to be understood. He was saying something to listeners. Else His talking was unreal. A constant temptation appeals, to what we think is reverence, to make of Jesus' life and teaching a mere mystery. That is to make Him untrue: the first reverence is due to truth. Even if a mystic interpretation of such

stories as those of Genesis be also a true interpretation, there was something primarily true to fact in those stories before the fact could become a figure of the invisible. Some good meaning to the hearers first if they will find it. Then a meaning transcending their capacity, and transcending ours, to whose apprehension the words ever invite us. So the prophets summoning exiled Israel to the penitence and the pain, the promise and leadership of a Return ; the glories never fully realized ; but in their approximation pointing on to a greater Return, unto a more abiding Home, shared by all God's children, led by a King, whose grace none of David's line could fill till God Himself took on Him David's heirship.

Christ spoke first for His first hearers to understand. Hence, there were temporary aspects in His speech. They were Orientals, were Jews. They must hear with Eastern ears. They must apprehend as heirs of Israel's nature and promises. And he must speak to ears so trained, to hearts so disciplined and so preju-

diced. To realize what He aimed to say, and what it meant to them, we must put ourselves into His place and theirs. Put yourself in another's place is the act unto which not only our moral sympathy, but our intellectual apprehension is bidden as well.

Of course there was much they misunderstood, but they understood, something. "The popular conception of the Kingdom of God was the alloy with which Jesus had to mix His teaching, in order to make it fit to mingle with the actual life of the world of His day. Without it His thought would have been too ethereal and too remote from the living hopes of men.

* * * As the goldsmith, when he is working with finest gold, has to make use of an alloy.

* * * But, when the form is complete, he applies an acid, which evaporates the alloy and leaves nothing but the pure gold of the perfect ring." * Influenced by contemporary thought He set Himself to purify it, as the creeds grew

* Stalker. The Christology of Jesus, 163.

in antagonism to current error. The error and ignorance He was combating must be grasped ere the truth He set for its remedy can be appreciated.

The meaning of Christ's words as spoken to His immediate hearers, and understood by them, must therefore be our primary study.

I very much doubt if the bystanders fell into the gross misconception of Jesus' meaning which marks much of our partisan discipleship. However we may fault their dullness and hardness of heart, their quick appreciation of the oriental style would never have made spiritual figures into ceremonial and theological facts as we are constantly doing, or have exaggerated color and vividness into rules of right behavior. It is more than a question between the literal and the figurative; it is a matter of the atmosphere in which a style of speech draws its breath. Our Christianity must learn to breathe that atmosphere, native air to them who heard Him, before we can make His truth our own. However startled and set to murmuring at His hard say-

ings, those who heard the discourse on the Bread of Life in the Synagogue of Capernaum could hardly have fallen into the sacramental materialism which has marked much pious discipleship as it quotes proof texts from the Sixth Chapter of St. John. The comfortable words of the Communion Office, "Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden," meant to His eager listeners relief from the traditional burdens of the elders, while they reveal depths of comfort found in Jesus Christ for all who stagger and wander and suffer.

Starting with its meaning to the hearers, Christ's teaching keeps on without limits in its application. "Its timeless and placeless note seems only the more accentuated by its narrow medium. * * * It has the marvelous faculty of being at home everywhere, intelligible in every speech, comprehensible to every mind, without country or time, because so akin to universal man. And it is more than curious that the teaching of which this can be said is so marked by the actualities of the hour and the

place of its birth." * These words of Fairbairn, in their eloquent tribute to the universality of Christ's teaching, recall us even more forcibly to the birthplace, to its first message as spoken unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

There follows :

2. Christ uses the language of accommodation.

Some words frighten us. If we call the Book of Jonah a Work of Imagination we use a complimentary term ; if we call it Fiction in the Bible we throw suspicion on the Book. The expressions have the same meaning. It is sometimes wise to substitute a word that has never been discredited ; sometimes better to hold fast to a desirable term and make it honorable. Language of Accommodation is a way of speaking adapted to peoples' way of thinking. If it confirms dangerous falsehood accommodation is wrong. If it conforms to current beliefs on

* Fairbairn. *The Philosophy of the Christian Religion*, 388-89.

incidental and unimportant matters, while teaching truth of first concern, it is doing what is wise, it is using the only possible means for enlightening and uplifting men. The question on which its propriety hinges is, What does the teaching aim at, to which all other purposes are subordinate?

Christ *must* use the language of accommodation as incarnate in the flesh, dealing with human nature from the ground of human nature as well. If not Himself unaware of facts no longer His concern in the day of His earthly life, He at least must treat men as ignorant. He must not obscure the teaching He came into the world to give by going out of His way to teach something else. In so doing, He awakens unnecessary suspicion, He imperils His business of teaching men the knowledge of God and the way of right living. There was in Him no hypocritical accommodation, concealing what He knew that He might win what He wished. He shared the expectations, was limited by the conditions of His time. When He talked of

that with which He was supremely possessed, God's way and will, He talked to men as a man among men. His limitations did not imply, as with the Scribes, that He was not always open to fuller truth. "These current and traditional ideas, which came to Him, not from heaven, but from His race and environment"—and in whose forms He embodied His divine teaching, as He Himself was in the form of a servant—"never succeeded in corrupting the inimitable purity of His inner piety or in falsifying the divine inspirations of His heart." *

As we read the Gospels we hear Christ actually using the language of accommodation: in His teaching of truth eternal attaching His language to current conceptions about things temporal.

Take the subject with which the Gospel stories abound, possession by demons. The theory that seems to deal in the most satisfactory way with all the facts of the Gospel narra-

* Sabatier, *Outlines of a Philosophy of Religion*, 193.

tives, the symptoms of the sufferers and the personifying of the demons, put side by side with modern medical knowledge and modern confessed ignorance, is that Christ adopted conceptions and used language generally current in speaking of lunatics. The assumption is not without difficulty, but at any rate, let us concede that it is no impeachment of the Master's moral and intellectual honesty. You may prefer to hold that certain epileptics and deaf mutes were inhabited by demons, while others were only victims of disease; that the powers of evil were specially arrayed in Jesus' time against His supreme manifestation of good; or, with Bushnell, that possession holds over to our time, though we have not the insight to discern the spirits. You may confess that like mysteries of hypnotic suggestion and duplex personality and sensual slavery—the drunkard and libertine—confront our ignorance to-day. Yet it was not with these medical and psychological questions Jesus was dealing when He lifted heavy burdens from men's spirits, and bade the bystanders behold the power of God.

A like accommodation to current beliefs is seen in Christ's attitude toward critical questions of the Old Testament. Did David write Psalm 110 because Jesus ascribes it to Him? We no longer feel bound, in loyalty to Him, to affirm it, when scholars like Gore in England and Peters at home see no connection between Jesus' incidental statement and the critical fact. The exact authorship of any Psalm is only to be *known by critical study*. Jesus' argument was in no way affected by exactness in that respect. He speaks of the Psalm as the people of His day were wont to speak of it. To have done anything else would have aroused unnecessary hostility, would be claiming to be wise beyond what He knew.

Again, Christ naturally falls into the argumentum ad hominem. He meets His listeners on grounds familiar to them, and shows them therein their error and the power of truth. Confronting the Sadducees in their denial of the resurrection He appeals to the Pentateuch, the portion of the Old Testament on which the

Sadducees most relied. His presentation of God as the God of Abraham and of Isaac and of Jacob, and therefore Abraham, Isaac and Jacob live on, is an argumentative use of the Old Testament which our timidity would have never dared to make nor our blindness been able to see. The argument does not rest on the present tense: I *am* their God, therefore the patriarchs are still living. Christ is bolder, with a diviner insight. In proclaiming Himself the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, God affirms Himself to be in relation with these men. Men with whom God is in relation are blessed and not wretched, are righteous and not wicked, are *living and not dead*. "God is not the God of the dead but of the living, for all live unto Him." "And this is life eternal to know Thee." Christ's logic starts with accommodation to the level of the humblest and issues in truth beyond the level of the wisest, to be apprehended only by spiritual intuition.

It follows once more, and in the line on which emphasis has already been laid.

3. Christ is an Oriental speaking to Orientals.

Christ teaches by figures. Where our stricter apprehension sees only the most literal, even there a figure lurks. "He spoke in pictures, not in syllogisms."

Speaking in figures belongs to the atmosphere of the East. The East seems itself a figure : its heat and haze ; its camels and caravans ; its leisure and dreams ; its tents and palaces ; its philosophers and beggers. They are facts, I suppose, but facts which dreams are made of. They are so far off as to be no part of our reality. They are so far off as to become the story tales of our childhood and the philosophies of our old age. Yet out of the East has come our religion. An Oriental is our Lord. While we can never be over eager in claiming Him as Lord of universal humanity, and count it an added tribute to His divine sonship that His person and message can be limited to no race or age, yet we must remember that He Himself came out of the East to be the Lord of all

worlds. His Eastern clothes and Eastern speech are indeed temporary features in the Universal Son of Man, features to be translated and allowed for, yet features that give color to the divine picture for men's admiration everywhere and always.

Christ's teaching by figures sets a seal on the divineness of imagination. "Jesus never says, You ought to exert a good influence on your fellow-creatures, but, Ye are the salt of the earth, ye are the light of the world; never. All events are ordered by Providence, but, Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? yet one of them shall not fall to the ground without your Father."* Without imagination, power to picture and so create, man would be without love and without hope, without creed and without worship, without home and without character.

An Oriental temper inheres, more or less, in all mankind. The Oriental can seem to get on without the West though it be to the loss of

*Stalker, *The Christology of Jesus*, 39.

vigor and efficiency. But the West can never live wholly on its own products. The value of the East is not to be exaggerated to discrediting western reason and practical sense. Yet to the East, of tropical suns and forests of palm and orchid, of repose and contemplation, we come not alone for spices and jewels and rare woods; not alone for birds of beauty and beasts of might; not alone for kings, conquerors, palaces; we come for great truths and men to listen to them, and men to speak and live them, and for Him who spoke as never man spoke and lived the life that is the light of men. Jesus came from Asia, and we carry Him back to Asia again, their Savior and ours. And the wisdom of the East is found more akin to the work of the East because one Man is Lord of both West and East.

The parable, the Oriental mode of teaching which Christ specially chose, is figure not alone for its specific truth, but figure of truth's appeal to universal characteristics and possibilities in man's nature. The parable first arouses inter-

est, then stimulates curiosity. Man may stop there, amused but uninstructed, a looker-on but not a sharer. The parable, its graphic picture the delight of the Eastern hearers, leaves something for that hearer to do that he may make its truth his own. The parable both conceals and reveals truth. From them that have not it takes away even that which they have; that seeing they shall see and not perceive, and hearing they shall hear and not understand. The message of Christ's Oriental parables it has in large measure been left to the Western world to appropriate. The permanent message of the Gospel of the Man of the East has been discovered and made their own by men of the West.

Once more :

4. Christ's Teaching is Principles and not Rules.

This is its most distinctive characteristic, one that must be grasped if the Christian message is to be found. Failing to find the principle that lies back of every particular teaching, we may not only miss the teaching itself, but gather

from the concrete example the very opposite of its intended lesson. In *all* the aspects of His teaching: as an intelligible message to the immediate hearer; as accommodation along lines of secondary ignorance, that He may lead men to primary truth; in resort to pictures and appeal to imagination, as peculiarly dear to men of the East and agreeable to human nature everywhere, Christ's supreme aim is to impress principles. Their application is to be the duty and privilege of Christian discipleship when the principle has been mastered. Again and again Christ enunciates the principle afresh, refusing to relieve his hearers of the responsibility of applying it for themselves. This He does that He may not lend Himself to legalism. Moses gave a law, Confucius gave a law, Ethical Culture gives a law, all school-master systems give a law; the Master summons men to discipleship, sets forth the principles on which discipleship to Christ must be based, leaves men in every age, of every race, with every individual need and condition, to measure for themselves their personal conformity to that standard.

This it is that makes Christ's teaching the world's lesson book. This it is which most of all requires the separation of its temporary expression that its permanent nature may be discovered. The chief duty of the student of Christ's words is to find the great principles His words are intended to establish. In these principles, not many in number but unique and radical, is Christianity's secret. They are illustrated afresh, and their truth reaffirmed in new light, as in His ministry He faces men's varied difficulties and sins and needs. But they are never put as abstract statements : they must be discovered, and formulated if you will, from their appearance and reappearance in His ministering life.

The Bishop of Ripon in his recent William Selden Noble lectures at Harvard emphasizes in brilliant fashion this characteristic of Jesus' teaching. Ascertain by study and discipleship the principles which underly true Christian action, and every counsel of the Master shines in new light. "He that receiveth a prophet in

the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward"—that is no mere counsel of hospitality and promise of return; many of us may never have the chance to receive a prophet or be equal to enjoying his happiness; but the cause is one, all who have it on their heart, all who sympathize with any good work, the humblest and the highest, are partakers of a like gladness; they stand together in the ranks of Christ's servants, the giver of the cup of cold water in Christ's name, and St. Paul winning city after city to Christ's discipleship.

The grip of law as the one condition of any discipleship is powerful, despite the Master's disowning of its value and refusal to apply it. Law served its temporary place as a method for bond servants. Principles belong to the permanent system as a method for sons. It is easier to be servants and keep rules, than to be sons and make free decision. In Christ's household there can be sons alone. A son's business is to acquaint himself with the family order, to bring his heart into harmony with the family temper,

and then apply what he has learned to the details of his own action. Christ sternly refuses to interfere between two brothers in a dispute over an inheritance, but "proceeds to translate the question of inheritance into a question of the spiritual life," thus giving a principle by which true Christians could themselves adjudicate all such disputes. "A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth."

The failure is again and again made in the history of Christian living, to grasp Christianity as principle ; discipleship to Christ is once more advocated as devotion to law. Noble as characters like St. Francis and Count Tolstoi must be confessed to be, incapable as we must freely acknowledge ourselves to be of measuring up to their standard of consecration, I cannot but feel that their literalism in interpreting Christ's teachings, their ordering of their lives after an external conformity to what they hold to be details of law, misses His method altogether. Such an interpretation of discipleship translates

itself into beauty in simple and devoted lives like theirs. It does not, however, give God's permanent message for all sorts and conditions of men. With other natures, and under different conditions, a like reading of Christ's message as law loses its power as gospel. As we saw in our study on the imitation of the Incarnate Christ, we cannot reverently put Him into our place, or ourselves into His place, in every particular. We might succeed in reproducing his clothing in which externals quite a different spirit from His would masquerade. "He that hath no sword, let him sell his garment and buy one * * * And they said, Lord, behold here are two swords." Swords are wanted now, actual steel swords, is the conclusion of the listening and loyal disciples. In His answer we see both their want of insight and the candor of the Evangelists' record. "And Jesus said unto them, It is enough." *Two* swords are enough, does our literalism still interpret? Oh, no! The tone is that of sadness. "You mistake me grievously. You have not caught the truth which swords

served only to illustrate. No swords whatever are wanted, but courage and patience and trust to face the evils sure to come. It is enough. Let the subject drop. You will learn some time to know my spirit rather than to catch up my words." Till that spirit is learned Christ's Gospel has not become the world's permanent possession.

III. These general considerations find detailed application in every page of the Gospel. The permanent is to be deduced from the temporary in Christ's teaching, as we separate its larger meaning from that borne by the words to the consciences of those who first heard them ; as, in our fuller knowledge of history and science, we make allowance for the language of accommodation, and grasp His eternal spiritual meaning under temporary disabilities ; as we admire the natural picturesqueness of His style, yet find its practical prose for our less responsive imagination ; as we search for the abiding principles of Christian discipleship behind their passing expression as Jesus set them forth to His cotem-

poraries. The task is a difficult one. It is a necessary and a worthy study just so far as Christianity is God's message to every people and time. It is the business to which all Christians are bidden as they are put in trust of that message, given in a time and a tongue, to make it a message of vital use for all times and tongues.

We find ourselves asking, What is left, What is permanent, What is the abiding meaning of Christ's words? We cannot give a list of the permanent things in the New Testament, leaving the temporary out. We cannot take every saying of Jesus and indicate what, in its words, its style, its conditions, is to be regarded as transitory. To do this would surpass the limits of a course of lectures and a lecturer's ability. It would also contradict the idea we have reached as characteristic of the Gospel, since it would be giving results for men to accept instead of illustrating processes they are bound themselves freely to apply. From a few and varied examples learn a method for all. We will take up a

few texts or classes of texts which illustrate the general considerations we have maintained.

1. The Sermon on the Mount contains some very characteristic sayings of Christ: "Who-soever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also* * * Whosoever shall take away thy coat, let him have thy cloke also. * * * Whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain * * * give to him that asketh thee." In form these sayings are apothegms. In style they are concrete, picturesque, vivid, not without the figure of hyperbole. In method they embody, in language suited to the time, with cases familiar to the hearer, abiding Christian principles. These principles are to be ascertained, not alone by a study of their application found in the concrete cases named, but by a discrimination of the abiding principle from the case which temporarily illustrates it. The Christian lesson is never to be learned by a slavish and unintelligent performance of just those very acts. It is doubtful whether even Jesus' immediate disciples, however primitive

and neighborly and Arabic were the relations of common people in the Holy Land, could wisely have done these exact things in realizing their Master's teaching: the language seems purposely exaggerated to drive the truth home. It is certain that to do those precise things now, to turn the left cheek when the right is smitten, to give without question, would be to prove false to the Christian virtues these illustrations aim to picture. We are to find therein the hitherto unknown but divine lessons: That Christians cherish no malice, be not contentious, enter into their brother's needs and give themselves out in his behalf. Then let us practise these virtues, in the light of God's spirit shed on today's conditions.

Many Christian people have felt that charity organization was open to the accusation that it substituted institutional aid for personal brotherliness and so missed the Christian spirit. Unquestionably, in practice associated charities have been open to this charge. Yet, its most earnest advocates are devout Christian disciples. They

find in its principles no contradiction to the teachings of Christ, but rather the intelligent application of those teachings to the conditions of modern life. They find in its personal investigations when conducted in a Christian spirit, in its gift of friendship rather than alms, in its discrimination between the deserving and the underserving, in its unwillingness to pauperize or duplicate, just the Master's temper. He showed it in a different way, He portrayed it in other language. That was only because He was Himself a poor man, was associated almost wholly with the poor, kept apart from organized activity—yet, He gave the notes on which all organization must proceed. The utmost that can be said against the Christlikeness of organized charity is that in our complex civilization, where each man is absorbed by his specialty, in place of his own friendly visitation he sends a wise and good representative. Jesus did that when He sent the disciples out two by two. He does that as Lord of all men when He pronounces, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto

one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me. Such modern writers on Charity as Francis Greenwood Peabody, "Jesus Christ and the Social Question," are getting at the heart of Jesus' teaching, and are finding in Him principles applicable to business and society as well as to almsgiving, principles whose large application find their birth in those simpler human relationships with which alone His life on earth was concerned.*

Jesus' teaching on Riches, such words as "Woe unto you that are rich," "How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God" seem on the surface to lend themselves to socialism. His own life was lived in very humble surroundings. The rich, as He knew them, were rich from extortion. He saw the peril of riches in a corrupt government and a decadent civilization. Against that peril He spoke with fearless and unmeasured words. So of like riches would He speak to-day. Yet, it

Peabody. Jesus Christ and the Social Question. Chap. V.

is poverty of spirit that he commends as the ideal temper of those poor in worldly goods. Where He in His earthly ministry finds humility and serviceableness associated with worldly prosperity, as with the family at Bethany and the counselor Joseph of Arimathaea, He welcomed their character and their wealth alike. Jesus did not array the rich and the poor against each other. To both He proclaimed the principles of stewardship for what they had, the danger lest their attitude toward material things, complacency in their wealth, bitterness because of their poverty, should lose out of their life spiritual riches. *

2. At the other end of Christ's short earthly ministry we have the so-called Great Forty Days.

To the teaching of that period has been assigned, in the opinion of many Churchmen, detailed instruction on the organization of the Church. Such instruction is assumed as proper

* Peabody. *Jesus Christ and the Social Question*, Chap. IV.

to be given rather than found expressed and recorded. It is a deduction from the one phrase, found in the Book of Acts, "appearing unto them by the space of forty days, and speaking the things concerning the Kingdom of God."

Two radically different suppositions confront each other on Christ's method with His Church, as we face the supposed teaching of these forty days. The one theory maintains that Christ not only founded and started His Church, but that He outlined and filled in all essential details of its organization. The other sees the Master Himself guided by God's Spirit, and leaving His Apostles with the promise of the same guidance to develop the Church to meet the needs of men. The one conception finds the three-fold ministry and the two necessary sacraments already in being in the three years when Christ was the visible Head of His Church, the Holy Communion being in a fashion anticipated by teaching and practice. The other finds the diaconate coming into being from the needs of the poor, the presbyterate from the establish-

ment of local churches, the episcopate as the Apostles are called from earth ; the Holy Communion gradually separated from the love feast, taken from the home meal to the Church ordinance, and surrounded by ceremonial ensuring its reverent perpetuation. If the one idea lays emphasis on Christ's minute care for His Church and so exalts its divine origin, the other asserts the continued presence of the Holy Spirit, Christ's witness and representative, and so magnifies the abiding divine oversight.

The two conceptions are practically a setting of temporary over against permanent interpretations of God's way and word in the teaching of His Son. One passage, at the very best two, in the Gospel, where Christ speaks of His Church. One, albeit most solemn and thrice reported, record of the Sacrament of His Body and Blood, with perhaps an anticipatory discourse. Are these sayings the measure of the permanent value of the Church and the Sacraments in the mind of Christ for His people? We may not, with the ecclesiastic, import into Christ's mind

that of which there is no evidence, and give to Church and Sacrament a supreme importance, transcending personal devotion and righteous living, for which the Gospel story furnishes no warrant. Nor may we, on the other hand, deny to the church of Peter and Paul, to the church of the fathers, to the mother church of England, and the free church of America, the right to determine under the guidance of the Spirit where emphasis shall be laid and expansion given to that of which Christ spoke only the germinal thought; what, in His plan and after His method, belongs supremely to Christianity's permanent deposit, to be adapted in its details to the needs of the generations as they come.

Indeed, the generations may lay a new emphasis where it has not been laid before, or take off one that has already served its purpose. The Church "must quit one point of view and move on to another. This is because its own historical position is shifting. While Scripture is meant to explain all the changing aspects of providence, providence, on the other hand, likewise

casts on Scripture an ever-changing light. The organizing thought of theology, if the Church is progressing instead of stagnating, will not be one truth or another forever. In our day the best ruling idea may possibly be the Kingdom of God or the Fatherhood of God ; but, if so, it will be, not because this was the supreme conception of Jesus, but because it is the thought which corresponds most intimately to the knowledge and the temper of the age."* The teaching of Jesus was in fact by no means formal. It was fragmentary, and "its fragmentary character was not an accident ; it was the result of a reaction against the tone and methods of existing teachers, and was involved in a deliberate attempt to come in contact with the humblest and most ordinary intelligence."† The Gospel was really *Jesus Dealing with Men*. We must stand with those men, put ourselves, as we may be helped to do, into Jesus' own

* Stalker. *The Christology of Jesus*, 28-29.

† *Contentio Veritatis*. 112.

mind, if we would become possessed of the permanent treasures of His Gospel. Further readjustments of Christian truth and Church relationships are ahead of us, as the permanent message claims its own. New emphasis will be laid where He intended the ages to come to lay them. Old contentions, founded on His words but not on His purpose, will disappear as He wishes them to disappear. The touchstone on How to live, How to serve, How to think, Christlike, will be the unfolding of the permanent in the teaching of Christ. We have touched His teaching heretofore too much on its external side. That is because dealing with the external is easy for us. It is not Christ's way. He uses externals as entrances into the inner where the Spirit waits to teach. For the Spirit's teaching, as the abiding Word of God in His Son, our reverent study is to lead the way.

Two striking examples of the temporary and the permanent in Christ's teaching we must pass at this time with the bare mention.

The first, Christ's freedom in dealing with the

text of the Old Testament Scripture, has been spoken of in the previous lecture. In Him, in His person and in His teaching, that Scripture was fulfilled. Fulfilled as He opens its meaning, the Scripture keeps on speaking a living message in history.

The other, the eschatology of Jesus, the constant recurrence in His teaching of the apocalyptic style, with the marked approval of that style in the Epistles, and its full efflorescence in the Book of Revelation, is so pronounced a phenomenon in the relation of the temporary and the permanent in New Testament Revelation as to deserve consideration by itself in the closing lecture. Eschatology, and the chosen vehicle for expressing it in the style of an apocalypse, is perhaps the most difficult and as yet untraversed subject in the Scriptures. Christian belief is still fast bound in the spell of its weird and mysterious fascination.

3. One saying, or a group of sayings, recorded of Jesus in the Gospels, claims our final attention, both from its prominence and value,

and from the light it may shed on our subject. This is His teaching about sacrifice.

The permanent meaning of sacrifice had to gain its place slowly; it is still far from complete apprehension. As an Old Testament idea it was comparatively clear, though its clearness had to do with its material rather than with its spiritual significance. Old Testament sacrifice was the offering even unto death of one's best to one's God. Death of the best, as a gift to God, were its prime notes.

When Jesus came it would seem that the old idea of sacrifice must disappear. Yet Jesus early faced the fact that He too, God's well-beloved Son, the best thing in God's universe must die. Facing the fact, He broods over it. The death of the righteous is an inevitable issue in an unrighteous world. That death in some mysterious way works back for the good of the unrighteous. That death by some sort of appropriation the redeemed must make their own. So the mind of the Master feels its way, pondering the problem of evil, conscious of the

long-suffering love of God, reading the large-
visioned words of the prophets. Then Jesus
speaks: "The Son of man shall be delivered up
into the hands of men, and they shall kill
Him;" "The Son of Man came not to be min-
istered unto, but to minister, and to give His
life a ransom for many;" "If any man would
come after me, let him deny himself, and take
up his cross and follow me. For whosoever
would save his life shall lose it, and whosoever
shall lose his life for my sake shall find it;"
"This cup is the New Testament in my blood,
which is shed for you."

Here, in Jesus' meditation and utterance, all
the words, all the ideas, whose later formulation
has revolutionized the doctrine of man and God.
Here are death, the cross, a ransom, the blood,
the new covenant in the cup, all the familiar
terms of the Christian sacrifice on Christ's own
thoughtful and persuasive lips. Does the Old
Testament measure their meaning? Do the
words themselves measure their meaning? Do
Paul and Peter, do Augustine and Anselm, do

Bushnell and Moody measure their meaning? Has the permanent message of Christ's Sacrifice, and the details of its sorrow and blessing, yet appeared from its incidents in time, from the words of Master and disciple striving to express it? Rather is not our thinking and preaching still in bondage to the *material* elements of Christ's sacrifice, and of our sacrifice in His name, from which He strove to deliver His disciples, and against which Paul uttered repeated protest even while his reasoning and phraseology fell again under its dominion? In the permanent message of Christ's work in man's redemption blood is no longer blood, death is no longer death, the cross is no longer a cross. Christ's touch on them, Christ's use of them, has transfigured their physicalness, their horror, their ignominy, into symbols, and symbols of beauty. The cross is the permanent symbol of Christianity; but it is not the wooden cross, it is not the Roman cross, it is not Paul's cross, or the cross of Protestantism, it is not the cross of my ideal bearing; it is the cross of Christ, the cross His

life and death illumined. "We are left, here at least and now, still gazing as from afar, not in fruition but in faith, on that which we have *not* realized in ourselves. We are still kneeling to worship, with arms outstretched from ourselves in a wonder of belief and loving adoration, that reality wholly unique and wholly comprehensive, the figure of Jesus crucified."*

* Moberly. *Atonement and Personality*, 323.

LECTURE V.

THE TEMPORARY AND THE PERMANENT IN PAUL'S THEOLOGY.

I. PAUL is the Christian theologian. He set the scope, even gave the phrase, for all later theologies. Paul did not know Christ in the flesh. Not "from his writings alone would the reader ever know that there was a baptism in Jordan, or a temptation in the wilderness, or a sermon on the mount, or a parable of tender wisdom, or a scathing of hypocrites, or an uplifting of penitents, or an agony in Gethsemane, of one who bore the name of the Son of Man."* Experiencing Christ only as a power Paul sought to interpret Him to himself and to others.

Beyond question is he not only an inspired interpreter of the religion of Christ, but its

* Martineau. Seat of Authority in Religion, 379-80.

most original and profound interpreter as well. Of the splendor of Paul's witness for Jesus it is difficult to speak with sufficient earnestness. Of the change Paul wrought in the attitude of the world of men toward the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and of the Gospel in its presentation toward the world of men, it is impossible to express one's self with exaggeration. He found the Gospel of Jesus Christ, in the hands of its first apostles, little more than the faith of a Jewish sect who believed that Messiah had come. He left it a message for universal humanity, claiming the response of the world's allegiance. Converted from the persecutor to the Christian disciple he set his eye on Rome ; and every step he travelled, every thought he forged, was to bring that world-capital into captivity to Jesus Christ, the high-ways, the commerce which all centered on Rome centering also on Christ, roads for Christ's messengers to travel, agencies for dispersing Christ's truth far and wide.

Did Paul succeed? He died, as his Master had died, obscure, unknown. Yet of all figures

of that age, and they are mighty, soldiers and kings and philosophers, the only one the whole world cares to remember is the name of Christ, and Paul is His interpreter. I sometimes think of that tent-maker, poor foot traveller along the dusty highways, with stooping shoulders and bleared eyesight, and frame wracked with frequent fever, and wonder if even his dauntless soul, his inward eye of fire, caught from afar the vision of his fame for all time to come, or measured the allegiance he would win for the cross and Him crucified. His has been a triumph more rapid and complete than he would have wished for, since in conquering it has conceded much that he valued as essential. His thought has mastered Christian thinking after a fashion he would be the first to regret, since Paul's theology sometimes obscures the truth of the Master. He surely would hesitate to claim or even to accept the dominant place Christianity has accorded to him. Men are instinctive hero-worshippers, and Paul stands forth as Christianity's hero, Paul the theologian.

Unique as he is, Paul was also a man of his time. "His school days in a Grecian city, his daily contact with its manners and its arts, his trade with the shepherds on the hills above and the captains of the ports below, had opened to him a world which it were more divine to save than to destroy. * * * At the same time, his own vehement and capacious nature moved uneasily, though on that very account with the more intensity, within the narrow discipline of his inherited religion; and was ready to burst its ligaments and, if only the lash would be quiet on the will, to achieve a double fleetness on the wing of love." *

He was a man eager to claim all the relationships which were the title deeds of honor in the circle within which he was born.

These honors, both of them his by right, both of them vehemently championed, were two.

He was a Roman citizen. When the chief captain answered, "With a great sum obtained

* Martineau. *Seat of Authority in Religion*, 379.

I this citizenship," Paul answered, "But I am a Roman born."

He was a rabbi-taught Jew, "a Hebrew of Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; as touching the righteousness which is in the law, found blameless." *

Of both inheritances, however difficult their combination in one man, he was alike proud. However supreme and universal the embrace of Jesus as Lord to which his Christian discipleship attained; however unstinted his outlook of sympathy and confidence on all the world of men, Barbarian, Scythian, bond and free; he remained with a reserve of his nature in touch with the superb pride of a citizen of Rome, with the separateness of the elect people of God. A rare combination: the aristocracy of Roman and Hebrew exclusiveness with the democracy of an universally interpreted Gospel; a combination found only in a short period of the world's history, within a limited area; an effective combina-

* Phil III, 5-6.

tion in a man of reality dealing with humanities. We are glad Paul was just a man of his unique time; it gives him kinship with ourselves, a kinship not of exact conditions, but of world-long sympathies.

The man and his thinking require a translating process. All the more marvelous that out of these two elements a Christian was made, *the* Christian, we may say, nearest both to the mind and the heart of his Master. This world Christian was made out of a Roman and a Hebrew. "No permanent change," writes Dr. Hatch, "takes place in the religious beliefs or usages of a race which is not rooted in the existing beliefs and usages of that race." *

The Epistles of St. Paul, especially in what we call their argumentative and doctrinal portions, are a struggle on the great Apostle's part to express in words the change through which his soul had passed.

The terminology adopted by an earnest man is

* Influence of Greek Ideas and Usages. Hatch, Page 4.

the result of his experiences. He has his favorite words chosen to express these experiences. Since Paul's life divided itself into two parts, before and after his conversion, his ideas ranged themselves in antithetical form. His thoughts grouped themselves and found utterance in contrasts: law and grace, faith and works, the old man and the new, the letter and the spirit. A negative is put first, but only that it may heighten the contrast with the positive. What a man has become shines out the more from what he was.

The greater the experience, the greater the task of finding words in which to express it. The explanation, in large measure, of the overwhelming style characterizing Paul's epistles: its long sentences, its intricacies of construction, its anacolutha, its parentheses, its massive and compelling sweep, its breaking from reasoning into doxology, its things hard to be understood which the ignorant and unsteadfast may wrest to their own destruction, is to be found, not so much in the man himself as in the mastering ex-

periences of his life which he is striving to record in words. "Human language must of necessity act as a limitation to the freedom of the incomprehensible, illimitable Spirit. A man full of the Holy Spirit will strive to pour forth to others the gift which God has committed to him to profit withal; but when he would do this in words, he finds that the more he is possessed with the Spirit the more is he straitened, hampered, baffled by the limitations of speech. He speaks with stammering lips; his utterings are broken, abrupt, inconsequent. It is the uninspired, shallow, conventional man that puts forth all his mind in a clear, simple, popular style; the prophet finds the Spirit thwarted by the letter, and he cannot fully utter the truth that is in him."* Paul must reason out his experiences, must tell forth his conclusions, before his fellow men, because they seemed to have solved his own hard problem and to be solvent as well for all human needs.

* Bartlett. *The Letter and the Spirit*, 25-26.

In uttering his heart he uses words already in existence, words in large measure cherished by him and his old companions. He must use words with which he was familiar, and strive to give them new force. You remember Luther's tribute to Paul's terminology when he says that his words are like living creatures having hands and feet. They become words of power. They are rooted in Paul's rich nature and supreme experiences. In a measure they convey that nature and experience to us, the measure being largely our responsive sympathy. Because of Paul's preëminence as an interpreter of the Gospel, his words become the technical words of Christian speech, become factors of moment in moulding Christian thinking. Yet they are words still and as such demand translation. The demand becomes more imperative because so much is at stake. The Greek sense, the Pauline sense, the universal sense must be discovered, the one from the other. Their first meaning was in Paul's experience; then they became his eager message to his fellows, then they must be made

my own as the thought of Paul, the thought of Christ, the thought of salvation fitted for me.

II. St. Paul's humanness, with its twofold proud background, constrained his reasoning, its method and its terminology, into two channels.

These are the Roman and the Jewish. We may for convenience call them the forensic and the rabbinic in his style. We might prefer the word *legal* to forensic were it not ambiguous. We say that Rome gave to the world law and Israel religion. But Israel's religion took the form of law, in commandment and ceremonial. When Paul uses the word law, which he does constantly and in a technical sense, he means that kind of law which Israel's religion set up. A religion that took the form of law he felt to be a failure, and found in Christianity a religion that was not law but grace. The civil aspect of law, Paul's Roman inheritance—its terminology, 'justice,' 'testaments,' 'heirship'—suggested no such antagonism to grace, rather lent itself to make the meaning of grace clearer. The very

ambiguity of legal phraseology in Paul's constant use: its one look from the Roman side, its other look from the Jewish: suggests the mingling in the one man of both inheritances.

For the Roman and Jewish aspects of his reasoning constantly run into each other. We find it hard in many of his arguments to decide who is speaking, the Roman or the Jew. We only know it is not a man of the modern world. Justification is a term of distinct forensic bearing, but Paul's affirmations of justification draw their illustrations largely from the Old Testament. The cross, with its nails and its shame, is a Roman punishment, but on it hung the Lamb of the Jewish sacrifice. Hardly do we know which in Paul to put first. If we defer to Rome's greatness, and claim him first as a Roman, it is not that he himself would claim his Roman citizenship as his proudest title, or that he makes most use of Roman phraseology in telling the supreme secret of his heart.

Yet, at least in idea, the Roman citizen and the Pharisee of the Pharisees are distinguish-

able. In the Roman is seen pride, confidence, world-domination; these marked Paul the man. In thought the influence of Rome on the phrasing of Christian theology came much later; but Paul would have claimed Greek influence for Rome, counting both as non-Jewish. It is more in his habits of thought than in the words he uses that Paul shows his Roman training. Into the forms—shall we call them shackles?—of his own minute rabbinic training Paul's thinking about his Christian discipleship was compelled to be brought. We sometimes wish that "firm as his grasp is of truths unspoken before, and glorious as are his outbursts of thanksgiving for an emancipated nature—that he would let them speak for themselves, instead of trying to extort them from cross questionings of Hagar and Ishmael, or striking again the desert rock to make them flow."* From this rabbinic vesting we are equally compelled to disentangle them anew if we would learn from Paul the way of penitence and pardon for ourselves.

* Martineau. *Seat of Authority in Religion*, 294.

Roman and Jewish influence alike are no part of the world's final form of Christianity: its worship, its thinking about God and Christ and man, its standard of ideal goodness seen in Hebrew as blamelessness, in Roman as valor. These forms of its early presentment at the hands of its most perfect convert may interest us as archaic studies, as historic illustrations, as ingenious bits of logic or splendid bursts of rhetoric—the universal Gospel for the universal man has yet to be found by eliminating feelings and figures and processes of thought of even a master disciple. “The belief that metaphysical theology,” writes Dr. Hatch in the Hibbert lectures of 1888, “is part of divine revelation has been Christianity's *damnosa hereditas*. It has given to later Christianity that part of it which is doomed to perish, and which yet, while it lives, holds the key of the prison-house of many souls.”* The extent of the influence of this traditional theology, whose parentage is traced

* Hatch. *Influence of Greek Ideas and Usages upon Christian Church*, 138.

to Paul by every theologian of every school ; the bondage from which we are being at last brought into a land of better promise ; the thralldom it even yet exercises ; the hindrance of its unreal phrases to our own pleas with men to take Christ as Master ; the obstacle to our brother's understanding and acceptance of the grace of God that bringeth salvation ; are reason and urgency for separating the temporary elements from Paul's teaching. We cannot plead in extenuation that each age and each school has misunderstood him ; cannot appeal from Paul misinterpreted to Paul as he himself speaks, till we have addressed ourselves to the honest task of distinguishing Paul the Christian from Paul the Roman and the Jew. It all issues in unrealness, in the assertion of facts about our religious life we do not for one moment believe. It may well be that we no longer hold and teach that Christ suffered the penalties of the damned, and quote Paul's "made him to be sin for us ;" we may have discarded the antinomian heresy that there is no

righteousness but imputed righteousness, and that all the good acts of unenlisted Christians are filthy rags, though Paul's fervid reasonings lend us text after text for such immoral, and may I say, un-Christly, ethics. But we are still under the bondage of religious conceptions, on the one hand sacrificial, on the other hand legalistic, from which the gift of imagination, the power to put ourselves in Paul's place should long since have released us. Old things have passed away. The obsolete has been condemned. The same freedom that Paul exercised in dealing with Old Testament conceptions while retaining their forms of expression would put him in the forefront, were he now Christianity's teacher, in condemning our slavish adherence to his own passing phraseology. "It appears to be the tragical lot of mankind, that of the great performances of their historical heroes it is always the limited and transient form rather than the eternal ideal substance which in the first instance receives chief attention. As in ecclesiastical Catholicism the dogmatic form of

Paulinism was preserved, so at the Reformation a similar fate befell revived Paulinism in the new scholasticism of orthodox Protestant belief." *

All reasoning processes have necessarily a taint of temporariness. They must be touched into spiritual life to become permanent. Bare logic, however convincing to the intelligence, does not appeal to the will. Paul never rested on his argument alone. He felt and expressed the spiritual purpose to which it ministered. Amid his most intricate reasonings in the Epistle to the Romans he breaks forth into thanksgiving for the truth he is discovering; and closes the subtle argument of the whole Epistle with five beautiful chapters, more than a third part of the Epistle, of practical conclusions based on his entire course of thought, how Christians should behave. The elaborated argument for imputed righteousness brings him out to the persuasion "that neither death, nor

* Pfleiderer, *The Influence of Paul on Christianity*, 230.

life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." * As we read, there is much difficult argument over which we stumble. As we conclude, there is only power from on high for right living over which we rejoice. Which things are an allegory, wherein we may see for all time how to read the Epistles of St. Paul. Shall we keep on worshipping his processes and missing his conclusions, conning his arguments and despiritualizing their purpose?

Robert Edward Bartlett, to whose Bampton lectures on the Letter and the Spirit reference was made in the first lecture, and from whom I have already frequently quoted, makes an admirable presentation of this feature in Paul's writings—a noble conclusion reached by processes that seem to us as fanciful and illogical. In his

* Rom. VIII : 38-39.

argument for Israel's Election "he comes round to the great conclusion that God's mercy is over all His works ; that He has concluded all, Jews and Gentiles alike, in unbelief, that He may have mercy upon all. But on his way to this conclusion he has given utterance to expressions which, if regarded not as obiter dicta, but as fundamental principles, may easily be made the basis of a system fatal to all effective belief in God's love and righteousness.—' He hath mercy on whom He will, and whom He will He hardeneth.' 'What if God, willing to show His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much long suffering vessels of wrath fitted unto destruction?' These and like phrases, taken by themselves and exalted into theological dogmas, have agitated the Christian Church for centuries with barren controversies, and filled men's minds with dark thoughts of God."* No phrases of theology are final. They partake of the perishable character of all human effort, of

* Bartlett. *The Letter and the Spirit*, 63.

the very intensity of the age in which they originated. Paul's logical processes share this temporary element: they are his own endeavor to explain and measure up to the supreme truths revealed to him and by him.

These facts established in our minds: St. Paul's reasonings the effort to voice and drive home his deep Christian convictions; the existence in his reasoning of two elements, a Roman and a Jewish, both his birthright, both dwelt upon with pride; the inevitable temporary color given to his theology, and through him to all Christian theology as its patron saint; let us read his Epistles anew to let the light of these considerations shine into his message.

The thought once conceived, its verification is met on every page, occasioning in us both surprise and a sense of difficulty. Such examination, to be of any real service in a single lecture, must content itself with a few characteristic passages. By their detailed study a clue is found for other like passages as our reading meets with them.

III. Roman or Forensic lines of Argument.

We will take examples of the Roman or Forensic argument first. This was not probably the more important factor in Paul's style, the influence of his Jewish training being more persuasive, but the Roman is strong in some very characteristic Pauline teaching.

I. Adoption.

Five times in his Epistles Paul uses the word adoption, *υιοθεσία*, "that we might receive the adoption of sons."* The phrase has been taken bodily into the Prayer Book, "are made thy children by adoption and grace:" and in the thanksgiving of the Baptismal Office, "we yield thee hearty thanks that it hath pleased thee to receive him for thine own child by adoption."

The modern implication of adoption marks the relationship, to use the least disparaging term, as one of an artificial character. An adopted child is one who has no natural ties with his legal parent. He is adopted to take the

* Gal. IV: 5.

place of children, because there are in the household no children of its own. Is our theology to take its tone from this modern conception because Paul used the word *adoption*? Is the supreme truth that God is our Heavenly Father and that all men are his children, to be emptied of beauty and gladness—His children, yes! but only His *adopted* children? The word has tended to lose from Christian thinking just the blessing that Christ revealed and that Paul cherished. Are we to force a literal notion of adoption, and that a modern notion, into our Christian theology, and so lower our conception of God's relationship to men?

Adoption is with us a comparatively rare social incident. With the Jews, as a legal transaction, it was absolutely unknown. "The family records of the chosen people were kept with scrupulous care, in order that the lineage of the Deliverer might be identified. Fictitious kinship could manifestly find no recognition in Hebrew genealogies."

With the Romans adoption occupied a very

different place. Its ceremonies were among the most prominent of legal recognition. The adopted son was in the family exactly as if he had been born in it. Adoption made him more a member of the family than descendants through the female line, and so far annihilated preëxisting personality as to operate for the extinction of debts. Adoption constituted as complete a bar to intermarriage as relationship by blood.*

St. Paul, trained as he was in Roman practices, made use of this word adoption to express a new and glorious idea which his conversion had brought home to him. "This metaphor was his translation into the language of Gentile thought of Christ's great doctrine of the New Birth. He exchanges the physical metaphor of regeneration for the legal metaphor of adoption. By the aid of this figure the Gentile convert was enabled to realize in a vivid manner the fatherhood of God, the brotherhood of the faithful, the obliteration of past penalties, the right to the mystic inher-

* St. Paul and the Roman Law. W. E. Ball, 4-6.

itance.”* He distinguished man’s relation to God’s Fatherhood from Christ’s by naming Christ as a son by nature and man as a son by adoption, both sonships sharing a common nobleness. By the use of the term he exalts rather than disparages man’s sonship. The same is true of allied words that gain their significance in large measure from association with adoption, such as testament, inheritance, assurance, sponsorship. Their use is to be explained from Roman forensic usages. Their abiding meaning is to be found in Roman use *again and again Christianized*.

When Paul, with the best words with which he was familiar, lifted the meaning of man’s sonship to God far above its previous signification, we are not to drop it, because the word he uses has changed its meaning, below Paul’s purpose. Men were potentially sons before Christ’s coming, though actually slaves. The chains of their slavery were struck off, and they were formally

* St. Paul and the Roman Law. W. E. Ball, 5-6.

adopted into the place where they already belonged. Robertson's explanation of baptism is at least a permissible view, that in baptism, "*made* a child of God," means *proclaimed*—he cannot be crowned king who is not king already. Father, Son, mean something different, something new, something more than procreation and descent, when God is found to be Father and Jesus found to be Son, and man to have a share in that sonship and brotherhood. If the noble word adoption helped Paul to this truth of Christian revelation it was good to use it; if it hinders our embrace, we will drop the word and hold the truth. "Because *ye are sons*, God sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father." *

Adoption, with its closely associated terms, may be, perhaps, the one example of an idea in Paul's theology taken wholly from Rome. Other illustrations primarily forensic, are modified by Jewish association. Both relationships

* Gal. IV : 6.

are affected by the further use in a Universal Gospel.

2. Justification.

The word justification used of the Heavenly Father's welcome for His children, is a forensic word, a word of courts, of legal relationships. In its thought it is Roman, in its application it is Jewish. Its forensic origin exerted a baneful effect even on Paul himself as a reasoner. He is found substituting for one legal justifier, the works of the law, another legal justifier, faith in Jesus Christ. Though in Paul's view these were opposites, though to him faith meant the consciousness of God's love in Jesus Christ made his own, yet as a forensic justifier on a line with works it too becomes an act of man. Belief in the Creed has as a consequence taken the place of, taken its place with, the works of the law as the way of man's salvation. The Jew who *must* keep the law has only given place to the Christian who *must* believe the Creed. How utterly would Paul himself repudiate this result! It comes from the temporary expression of a great truth securing permanent canonization.

Justification is a noble word, Paul's discovery, Luther's re-discovery, to express a noble and lost idea. Its nobleness is found as it throws off the wrappings of its origin. In great emergencies words appear as things. Retained as only a word, a literal word in a decadent age, it hides the thing, prevents its realization. There are signs of a wiser reading of Paul's revelation to-day. The way of man's salvation, which he expressed so honestly as Justification by Faith, we are pressing with new formularies, paraphrasing his temporary and legalistic phrases. Harmony with the divine purpose; Social Service; service of man in God's name; sonship to the Heavenly Father, and brotherhood of man in Christ's brotherhood; these are our day's summons to Christian discipleship. The gift of prophecy is to tell the old story in fresh language, with figures of present day appositeness.

IV. Jewish or Rabbinical lines of argument.

As we pass to examples of Jewish or rabbinical lines of argument in Paul's theology, we remember that Paul was a rabbi and not a priest.

His concern, in his discussions, was with God as the giver of law rather than with God in the temple as object of worship. His language, even when it has to do with sacrifice, is rabbinical and not sacerdotal. Hence, his illustrations and arguments are in the main from the law as ethical, as laying down commandments and enforcing penalties. In this he differs from the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews.

Taking up the rabbinical side of Paul, our attention will be directed rather to particular lines of argument than to general processes of thought. Paul's narrower rabbinism appears in his logic as his Roman inheritance colors his theology. The rabbinical schools had their own peculiar ways of reasoning; ways inconsequential from our point of view and certainly transient: but they were the ways of Paul's logic.

It is true of Paul's rabbinic processes as of his forensic or Roman that they have deeply affected, perhaps injuriously, our Christian ways of thinking. The whole presentation of man's sin as closely related to the sin of Adam, and to be

interpreted by it, is artificial and dangerous. It tends to relieve the individual from a sense of responsibility for his own wrong acts ; it provokes from the unbeliever amusement, if not denial ; it fails in all persuasive power, not helping a man to realize penitence and obtain pardon for his own need ; but itself, since it conjures by the mighty name of Paul, first demanding explanation. It is no part of the permanent message of the Gospel. It may have a suitable historical and figurative place in our liturgies, though it seems incongruous to give thanks that a little infant has put off the old man ; but in our reasonings and persuasions it is antiquated.

Still, we may say, Paul's general Old Testament way of speaking has become endeared to us, using the facts and figures of sacred history as symbols of universal experiences. He makes, by very contrast with the puerile concerns of the barren rabbinism in which he was trained, great stories and great truths live. He is himself working out from his traditional predilections, as when he finds the origin of sin to be now in

Adam and now in his own flesh, from which contrast or contradiction abiding truth must emerge.

To the lines of argument by which he supports his contentions we now turn, and find ourselves perplexed as Christian students and teachers. Reasonings, endeared to the rabbi, are utterly unreal to us and in the larger sense untrue.

1. Rabbinical dealing with Facts.

In dealing with facts of the Old Testament Paul's rabbinical training shows a complete indifference to history as history; exalts unverified tradition to an equal place in his argument as history itself; deals with the persons of history as not so much persons as symbols and allegories. "For they drank of that spiritual rock that followed them;" * there was no rock that followed them, save in the imagination of the rabbis. "For these women are two covenants," † Hagar to Paul being rather a mountain in

* I Cor. X: 4.

† Gal. IV: 24.

Arabia than the wife of Abraham and mother of Ishmael. Abraham himself is twice introduced in an elaborate exposition as an example of justification by faith and not by law, the whole argument turning on Abraham's priority to Moses. But the value of a truth does not lie in its priority in time but in its essential character. "Christian doctrine rests finally, not on theories of what man was or was not in prehistoric times, but on the indubitable realities of experience." *

This method of dealing with Old Testament people and narratives as primarily embodying the revelations of the Gospel, is harmless enough if treated with comparative indifference. If only we had the courage to be as free with Paul, rabbi and reasoner, as he with patriarchs and kings! Christian thinking has fastened a yoke upon the neck of Christian disciples neither Paul nor we are able to bear. Arguments casual and temporary, such as Paul the rabbi was himself yielding to Paul the apostle, are made, if not

* Forrest. *The Christ of History and of Experience*, 271.

articles of the Christian faith, yet steps in Christian discipleship. Adam and Abraham and Esau and Moses, their vivid personalities and splendid service to their own time obscured by rabbinical glosses, have been laid upon our Christianity as abstract ideas which we must accept or else miss salvation. Paul himself would be foremost in decrying such slavery to the letter, and properly plead his own use with the Old Testament against it.

2. Rabbinical methods of exegesis.

In close relation with his handling of the persons and stories of the Old Testament is Paul's handling of the text. Paul is an exegete rather than a philosopher. He reaches his conclusions by an appeal to Old Testament texts and he deals with those texts after a purely rabbinical fashion. His conclusions are of permanent value, are inspired truths revealed from God at Paul's hands. His methods of defence are purely human, lend no support to the conclusion, require themselves study and apology. They are not ways of reasoning acceptable or

even true to our thinking. Other and living supports for the great truths set forth must be found afresh in each age. So philosophy is summoned to defend the being of God, the freedom of the will, the moral authority by fresh arguments as the old become discredited. The same powers he had used in denouncing Jesus as a fanatic and blasphemer before his conversion Paul now used to proclaim Him as Redeemer and to glory in His cross, but they were powers limited by his technical training.

When, in writing to the Galatians, he represents the promise made to Abraham as spoken to his seed, he adds, "He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ."* The whole argument turns on the use of a noun in the singular number. But the noun is collective and refers to the posterity of Abraham as a whole, not to any individual. The *prophet's* eye may see the individual as alone fulfilling the promise, but the

* Gal. III, 16.

grammarians and the logicians cannot find him in the singular number, "seed."

Scattered through the whole tenth chapter of the Epistles to the Romans, in which the Apostle deals, his heart full of tenderness, with the problem of Israel's unbelief and consequent rejection, are quotations from the Old Testament. Verses 5-8 contain quotations from Moses in the Law, intermingled with sayings of Paul in the Gospel. These quotations, we may say, as the readers felt, have a good sound. They are taken from the Septuagint and not from the Hebrew. They are apparently from memory, being singularly inexact. Worst impeachment of all, they are used not only with a meaning differing from that of their original purpose, but conveying its exact opposite. "For Moses writeth that the man that doeth the righteousness which is of the law shall live thereby. But the righteousness which is of faith saith thus"—this last sentence is Paul in the Gospel, then he takes up Moses again, and quotes what he says of the law as though it

were said of the Gospel—"Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? or, Who shall descend into the abyss? But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, in thy mouth and in thy heart" *—then Paul drops Moses, yet goes right on—"that is, the word of faith which we preach." If you can rescue this quotation from its intricacies of Moses and Paul, of Law and Gospel, you will find its method, as Dr. Sanday says in the *International Commentary*, "the same as, and as good as, that of the rabbis, but no better.—As an expounder of religion Paul belonged to the whole world and to all time; as a logician, he belonged to the first century. * * * Paul isolates one side of his argument in one place, one in another, and just for that very reason, we must never use isolated texts. * * * The doctrinal deductions must be made at the end of Chapter XI and not of Chapter IX." †

* Deut. XXX ; 12-14.

† Sanday. *Romans, International Commentary*, 304, 267 ?

Illustrations of such modes of reasoning, to be found in every Epistle, do not militate against the splendor of Paul's arguments, or their convincing power as a whole. Only in the lesser logic we find processes to be discounted as temporary, for which must be substituted modes of apology calculated to appeal to our time. The monuments of ancient architecture are beyond criticism; in many of their interior adaptations modern science may suggest improvements. Christ did redeem us from the law — that is the glorious discovery of St. Paul, set forth at length and from varied points of approach in Galatians, Corinthians and Romans. To our reading the burden of the law is felt to have even a wider application than Paul realized, and Christ's deliverance has reached on to needs he did not know, and the rationale of the release finds explanations to which the Epistles can only minister a stimulus.

V. There remain, for our thought in this lecture, some *practical* passages in Paul's writings, partly figures of rhetoric, partly advice on be-

havior, that illustrate temporary features in St. Paul, which we must learn, as we have the right, to put in the background.

1. It has been aptly suggested that Paul's favorite illustration of the Christian life by military figures has occasioned an unfortunate, at least an overabsorbing, adoption of that figure in Christian hymns, and in Christian profession. That a figure is Scriptural, while it lends sacredness, may obscure rather than make plain a truth or an act. Our modern Christian illustrations would be more naturally taken from society or from sanitation. In his figures, Paul was far less human and universal than his Master. Paul went through the Roman world seeing nothing but men at their work, having apparently no eye for nature or art. Jesus Christ, in his limited area of Palestine, was alive to the beauty of flower and stream, loved the mountain side apart, and the plays of little children.

2. In his Epistles, as being letters of counsel to Christian converts of his own apostleship,

Paul is compelled to give practical advice on minute details. These relate not alone to morals, but to passing customs and the need of special localities. They are of the nature of sumptuary legislation, which is discredited in our time, finding its only reason in temporary emergency. An unreasoning reverence for every word of Scripture fastens these usages on states of life for which they have no meaning. This brings the Bible, and the Christian Church so handling it, into merited condemnation.

In a most striking and difficult passage in the First Epistle to the Corinthians,* Paul bids men keep their heads uncovered in church, and women covered. He enforces his instructions by an elaborate and complicated argument. Its culmination, "For this cause ought the woman to have power on her head because of the angels," has taxed the diligence and ingenuity of Scriptural scholars. It surely is both a rabbinical style of argument and a rabbinical

* I Cor. XI : 2-16.

use of an Old Testament legend. The notable feature in the passage is its influence on the customs of Christendom. In Christian assemblies through all the ages, no matter what the climate or the local conditions, men go uncovered and women are covered because Paul so advised the Church in Corinth. And a Christian bishop directs that female candidates for confirmation in America, wear some sort of a veil, which should be provided at public expense, because it was a shame for a woman to be uncovered in heathen and dissolute Corinth. Herein surely is the perpetuation of a temporary injunction which misses the Apostle's noble and permanent principle, that the usage of Christians should not go counter to the social habits of the communities where they live. In Paul's writings, as in Christ's teachings, the principle is to be discovered and applied. Its application will vary from that of another age and people, perhaps be the exact opposite.

We may well let Paul interpret himself. We no longer feel it unsafe to hold him mistaken

about Christ's second coming in his earlier Epistle to the Thessalonians. "We that are alive shall be caught up in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air;"* and correcting it in his dying words to Timothy, "For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand."† We may still emphasize Justification, the Death of Christ, and the Cross, Paul's divine legacy to Christian faith and hope; but he himself will help us to read new meanings into these. Let Paul speak once again to us, in our language and after our needs. Let his enthusiasm be contagious and perpetual, but it was an enthusiasm appealing to no earthly or sordid passion, it was an enthusiasm for the one thing that cannot die out of the world, but lives on with fresh fervor and new expression, the enthusiasm which Paul terms "the love of Christ."

As we read, again and again, with new wonder

* I Thess. IV : 17.

† II Tim. IV : 6.

and new gladness, the story of that love, which Paul had made his own and so become a new man, which he strove with all his gifts and training to make clear to others, we find, to paraphrase a great word of Dean Stanley in his lecture on Abraham, "the hands are the hands of the rabbinic Saul; but the voice is the voice of Paul the Apostle—the voice which still makes itself heard across deserts and continents and seas; heard wherever there is a conscience to listen, or an imagination to be pleased, or a sense of reverence left amongst mankind." *

* Stanley's *Jewish Church*, Vol. I, p. 13.

LECTURE VI.

THE TEMPORARY AND THE PERMANENT IN THE APOCALYPTIC STYLE.

I. The Fact of that Style.

1. IN New Testament times a style prevailed, particularly in religious writing, that is far aloof from the style in general use with us, and one difficult to understand. It had come as an inheritance from the Sacred Writings of the past. Its first appearance in canonical literature is the Book of Daniel; and two hundred years later the closing Book of the New Testament Canon, the Book of Revelation, employed the same style. The name of this literature is apocalyptic. The apocalyptic style is not confined to these two canonical books. It marks books associated with both Testaments, within and without the so-called Apocrypha. We recall, as examples, the Book of Enoch and the Revelation of Peter.

Not only does the apocalyptic style appear as the characteristic mark of some books, it also is a permeating note in many writings which are not spoken of as apocalyptic. This could hardly fail to be so since its use was current and accepted—thus an apocalyptic style runs through the utterances of Christ and the writings of Paul.

This is a literary phenomenon requiring careful examination as we separate the temporary from the permanent. We must determine how far such a style conceals and how far it reveals the truth: what allowance should be made in our interpretation of the truth thus expressed; how far its phraseology and atmosphere should be part of the abiding message of religion. In a word the separation of the temporary from the permanent finds such marked exemplification in the apocalyptic style as to give warrant for devoting a special hour to its study.

2. What is this apocalyptic style in which two books of the Bible are wholly written, whose influence is felt in so much of the treasured

teachings of other books, and which left the sacredness of its method to many books barely omitted from the canon in either Testament ?

Apocalypse is an uncovering of something hidden, a revelation of something unknown. John's Apocalypse is not the only revelation. The emphasis of this definition is to be laid, in either clause, on the last member. The thing hidden which is now uncovered, the something unknown which is now revealed, that was what the earnest Jew and Christian valued ; the mystery made clear rather than the method of disclosing it.

The word apocalypse is closely associated with the word eschatology. Eschatology is the science of the Last Things. The association is so close that in practical use, while the words are, of course, not synonymous, they mutually suggest each other. Eschatological subjects are uniformly treated in the apocalyptic style. The last things : Death, the Intermediate state, Resurrection, Judgment, Heaven, Hell ; these mysteries are handled in a mysterious style. Both

subjects are before us in this lecture. Eschatology—the idea ; Apocalypse—its method of expression. All the mysteries that men want to know about : what lies before them ; the outcome of what now is ; the issue for the man, the nation, the world, the soul ; the whole problem gathered by the Seer into the one transcendent word Life. These are the interests of eschatology as a philosophy, and of apocalypses as a style. You see how wide a range the subject covers. The centre of gravity of early Christian faith and doctrine was eschatology. Jesus has added the fate of the world and of the soul to the earlier interest in the fate of Israel alone.

The characteristics of the apocalyptic style, as it deals with these mysteries, are :

(1.) The use of figures, material figures, often gross, always intense.

(2.) A fantastic habit, of which the best that may be said is that it is highly artificial.

(3.) Enigmatic utterance. This perhaps becomes the most distinctive mark of the apocalyptic style, largely because it gave most pleasure ;

the reader was set to solving the puzzle. In the solution he, and countless generations of his successors, busied at the same pious task, lost all sense of the spiritual message in their ingenious guesses about the meaning of its expression. A puzzle—does its difficult solution pay busy people? It is such a different kind of figure from the Master's gracious parables; the study of these ennobles in the very process. Daniel's "weeks," and "the number of the beast" are but samples. May not the permanent reading of the Bible leave their solving, at least as a spiritual value, out of account? When Christian piety comes to its Holy Week, it may better read the simple record of the Evangelists how Jesus suffered than con over the meaning of Daniel's vision; "After the three-score and two weeks shall the anointed one be cut off—and he shall make a firm covenant with many for one week and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and oblation to cease."* For the full,

*Dan. IX : 26-27.

perfect and sufficient sacrifice *has* been offered for the sin of the whole world. Nor can we subscribe to the assertion of the Book of Revelation: "Here is wisdom: let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast: for it is the number of a man; and his number is six hundred three-score and six."* Whatever the dread of the seer over Roman tyranny, *we* can without danger say Nero, and not 666, if we mean Nero.

(4). A sense of superiority. A confidence amounting almost to arrogance appears in the apocalyptic style. Daniel's modesty saves him from such apparent arrogance, even more than we find in the book of Revelation. The Apocalypticist knows all about the other world, its times, inhabitants, occupations; knows nothing about this world, its duties, its morals—as witness the Anabaptists;—has a lofty pity for the ignorant whom he does not propose to enlighten unless they acquire his shibboleth.

* Rev. XIII: 18.

(5). Conjuring by phrases. The favorite words of the apocalyptic style recur again and again ; and as the style has found a later following have become a cherished heavenly terminology. The Kingdom, the Coming of Christ, the Day of Judgment, the last Assize, the Millennium : not to count the lesser spirits—the Dragon, the Scarlet Woman ; and again the first and second Resurrection, and ‘ Jerusalem ’ as summing up all possible blessings.

3. The influence of the apocalyptic style *lasts on*.—It carries over from the Old Testament to the New, from the New Testament to Christian thinking, features both in their expression and in their existence utterly obsolete. It has fastened on to Christianity a passing, shall we say a grotesque, conception of religion, with what appears to be a permanent hold. To our religious thought, personal religion has become a scheme, and in that scheme looms up, sometimes as its consummation, oftener as its warning, Death and the Second Coming and the Last Day. Our aptitude for spiritual duty sur-

renders to a consecrated Waiting, under the spell of the same inheritance. And our Christian reasoning on the method of the divine government is moulded in the same distorted and unreal conception.

You may say that, after all, our Christianity does not take seriously its apocalyptic inheritance. Deal with men as preacher or pastor; deal with your own soul in the attempt to formulate your Christian conceptions, and see! Let the season of Advent recur; let the stated revival time of Lent come round or a special revival be stirred in your midst by God's Spirit;—Christian life will make the endeavor to form itself on these same unsolved and outgrown enigmas, and Christian thinking labor to correspond thereto. There is a distinct loss in trying to mould Christian life and Christian belief after these outgrown and unmeaning fashions. As matter of fact we do not become good that way, nor believe in those things as Christian realities. Yet what is it to be a Christian, how does one become a Christian, what does the Christian

believe at bottom about the future of the soul's life? Why do we keep on talking as if these apocalyptic methods were Christianity's permanent blessing? Why do we not find present day ways of telling present day experiences? This is all the Christianity that many presumably Christian people have. It may be put in one vigorous term—it is a religion of *Catastrophes*: Something outside his own power, happening to a man when he is converted, when he comes to himself in judgment and immortality. It is what we give as religion to our children, to our fellows coming to us with inquiry or criticism. Its prevalence imparts an unreality to our whole religious life. Unreal though it be, it is vehemently contended for. We need not point to Montanists of Tertullian's time, or to the Chiliasts of the tenth century, or to the Second Adventist of one hundred years ago. The early years of my own ministry were fired with a millennial revival. I have yet on file sermons of my own aglow with the ardor of conferences in which the elder Tyng and other of our wise

fathers and brethren went the full length of identifying the Christian Gospel with its apocalyptic shroud.

We go further. Such an identification is a disloyalty to the Gospel itself. That disloyalty was avowed in these notable conferences of which I speak, held in the later seventies. The disloyalty takes the form of discouragement and distrust as it begins by pronouncing the Gospel of the Incarnation a failure. A tone of regret over that failure changes almost into a tone of exultation: "we find," it seems to say, "this failure to have been expected and anticipated. What Jesus could not accomplish by His life and death and resurrection and giving of His Spirit at Pentecost He will now accomplish by some new and awful phenomenon. He is about to appear in the clouds, and awe into submission by such an Epiphany, those whom He could not win by His earlier manifestation." So a blaze of glory shall succeed, where a life spent going about doing good has failed. Is that the Gospel? "The Galilean Prophet" says Martineau "had

been taken into retreat till He could fulfil the prophecies." * Even an earlier prophet could have told us that God's highest manifestation of Himself is not in the earthquake, nor in the fire, nor in the thunder, but in the still small voice. If God may not save man by manifesting Himself in man as man, then man must go unsaved ; for the Incarnation of the Son of God is the one complete divine manifestation that has been vouchsafed us. A catastrophic religion misses the very secret of the Gospel, fails to be a permanent religion.

4. All this said and said strongly, it remains to be said and with equal earnestness that the apocalyptic idea and style alike have their *value*.

We can spare neither Daniel nor Revelation as books, nor yet the apocalyptic phraseology as it is scattered through the Bible, from our Sacred Volume. A broader wisdom than we have thus far been criticizing in this lecture has retained it. It only requires in its use a censor-

* Martineau. Seat of Authority of Religion, 395.

ship which values its word, but fears not to pass judgment where judgment is necessary.

We must put the Apocalypse, whether book or style, in its right place: not with history, with record of fact, or with prose; but with poetry and vision. In its literary aspect we should deal with it as we deal with hymns. We do not sing theology, though hymn-writers often try to force their theology on us under that guise. If it be a good hymn the whole Christian world will unite in singing it, and discount its theology as temporary. We Christian teachers and thinkers today are never to fail in our consciousness that the historic Creeds are primarily great hymns of praise: therein they stand apart from temporary Confessions of Faith, and therefore belong to universal Christianity.

Poetry and vision are invaluable, but their truth and comfort are to be disentangled from any passing expression of it; that expression took its color from the outward circumstances as well as from the culture and intelligence of the age in which it appeared. "It is, indeed, worth

noticing," writes Bartlett in the Letter and the Spirit, "to how great an extent Christian eschatology has been moulded by such circumstances. In days of oppression and persecution men have drawn comfort and hope from the thought that Christ's coming could not be long delayed, and have cried, 'Lord Jesus come quickly,' and have looked eagerly for the sign of the Son of Man in heaven. In days when theology was systematized and the Kingdom of Heaven assumed the form of a feudal monarchy, men imagined a magnificent and glorified court of justice, in which apostles, martyrs, confessors, monks, and virgins should sit as assessors, or more than assessors with the Judge, and should take part in the judgment of the nations who should be gathered at the judgment Seat." * This passing phraseology remains a treasure despite its temporary features, if it be used as a *poetic* treasure, or a treasury of devotion. We read and shall read Keble's Christian Year, just as it was written, though both our ecclesiastical

* Bartlett. The Letter and the Spirit, 68, 69.

and theological conceptions may have parted from his. We read the Imitation, and Holy Living and Dying, just as they are written, to warm our present-day piety, though its exact expression does not correspond to either our feeling or our reason. We quote the precise language of what has been long treasured, or is a world master-piece, making the quotation a source of inspiration and comfort for times and thoughts far removed. Passing conscientious judgment on the worthlessness for Christian edification of much of the book of Revelation, we come back at the bedside of the sick, in the house of the mourner, when we summon the awakened soul to Christian discipleship, to its matchless pictures; we repeat its words with a tenderness never lost from our hearts; we sing of pearly gates and heaven built walls with a new resolve to run with patience the race that is set before us, "And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." *

* Rev. XXII : 17.

The value that we thus put on apocalyptic writing in the New Testament, a value best illustrated by the use we make of poetry, is closely allied to the service rendered to religion by mysticism. Christian thought has modified its attitude towards mysticism very markedly today. That attitude neither concedes everything to it on the one hand nor sweepingly condemns on the other. We have grown to realize its place, the speciality of its gift to gifted souls, the message it may have to all souls in hours of emergency or attitudes of heart. The chapter headings in the English Bible, notably in the Song of Solomon, do not, of course, belong there as part of the Bible. They are intrusions, if you please, of some mystic editor's idea of the chapter's meaning. If their composer were a true mystic, that is possessed with inner vision, these headings may help the imagination as we read the chapter, and perhaps the interpretation when the primary sense has been found.

5. In the light of these thoughts how are we to deal with the New Testament? We are to

recognize the existence therein of an apocalyptic style and eschatological detail. These are in the New Testament because they were in the current religious writing and thinking of the Jews. Recognized, we are to pick it out, and ask what it means, its meaning to be learned from its use in the Old Testament and from the interests on which men's minds were set as they wrote. Its presence actually accepted, its meaning so far as possible disentangled, it remains for us to ask its permanent value. In deciding this we must fearlessly distinguish the value of poetry from prose, the value of the mystical from the practical. The value may be greater than we have realized but it will be different, and it will demand a readjustment of ideas of the greatest moment. An unreasoned deference to the apocalyptic style has given wrong answers to such questions as: What is it to be a Christian; What does God count to be goodness; Is the order of the world proceeding after the divine plan; Is the outlook for God's children, for Christ's disciples, one of courage and hopeful-

ness; Has the King come and is His Kingdom already set up; or are we still without a King and in the realm of the Prince of the Power of Darkness?

II. Christ's use of the apocalyptic style.

Our first concern, indeed our main interest in the subject before us, is the use which Christ makes of this current apocalyptic style, and the influence of such use on our conception of Him and His teachings.

1. We must at the outset concede the existence of apocalyptic phrases and ideas in our Lord's teaching, the assertion of Joh. Weiss that it is the very centre of Christ's teaching, we must pronounce extravagant. "It may be that Jesus was more the child of His age than we have been accustomed to suppose; and ideas or phrases may be recovered from apocalyptic literature which have entered into His teaching; but these are no more than the particles of inorganic matter which the plant takes up into its own substance and transmutes into the forms of beauty. Indeed, the more the apocalyptic

literature is unearthed, the more is the incomparable originality of Jesus enhanced; for nothing else in the whole range of human records is more utterly wearisome and worthless."* Whatever use He made of it He touched it into living power.

Jesus' use of the Old Testament was that of a devout Jew who turned to it for comfort in the trials through which He must pass. He quoted its familiar language and felt therein the spirit of saint and wise man strengthening His own, sharing with Him in the very utterance His confident trust in God. This is precisely what the Christian does in times of trial, what he is bidden do and find his comfort; and it is to the language of the book of Revelation, and of the hymns of the Church, that he turns in the hour of his sorrow or his death. Jesus felt the influence of the book of Daniel, and the appeal of its mystic language was more powerful to Him as the shadow deepened.

* Stalker's Christology, 66-67.

The Bruce Lectures on the Eschatology of Jesus delivered in 1903 by Lewis Muirhead are a singularly sympathetic appreciation of Jesus' use of the apocalyptic style. One or two paragraphs will help us. "Jesus found something in the book of Daniel, that responded with peculiar emphasis to His own knowledge of God and the Kingdom, that both was and was to be intrusted to Himself." "The seer in Daniel contemplated a condition of national fortunes, that seemed to him, in a secular sense, desperate. In His discourse to the disciples Jesus had in view a condition of secular affairs, resulting from the nation's unfaithfulness to God, equally hopeless; and when, speaking to the disciples, He cited Daniel, I understand Him to have meant, in effect, mainly that the pledge of deliverance, given in that ancient time to the faithful, was still valid."*

Jesus, then, uses the style of the apocalypse and the language of eschatology. He uses it,

* Muirhead *Eschatology of Jesus*, 80, 94, 95.

by way of quotation to comfort and explain to Himself His own position as "Son of Man"; and by way of counsel to make that position clear to His disciples and to encourage them in carrying on the work of the "Kingdom of God." You see in this last phrase with what ease we ourselves fall into language, to which the adjectives "apocalyptic" and "eschatological," may be properly attached. I sometimes wonder whether our current Christianity could not be vitalized and be made genuine, if we foreswore entirely the use of "Kingdom of God," "Son of Man," and like traditional phrases which fall so glibly from the tongue and mean so little to the life. Yet our deeper duty is to give a new birth to all the old words by discovering their permanent treasure. That is what Christianity, and the Church rooted in history, is set to do.

2. What Jesus spoke we know from what the Evangelists recorded. Both in hearing and recording His language all apocalyptic phraseology seems to have held a special attraction for them. Of course they did not write down

everything which Jesus said. But it might appear that they left no utterance of His which possessed this apocalyptic tone unrecorded. Themselves under the spell of both style and idea, their selection of material and the form in which they wrote it were disproportionately colored by this apocalyptic style. "The disciples were not so free as the Master. They corrected prophecy. Instead of one advent of the Messiah they imagined two, the first in humiliation, the second in glory. The one having been realized, they expected the other with a more ardent confidence. This faith in the imminent return of Christ and of the end of the world dominates all the thoughts as well as the feelings of the apostles: it determines and colors their Christianity, their theory of redemption, their ethics, their idea of salvation, so that to expound their writings and estimate the worth of their reasonings, the historian must always read them and explain them in this light. It is for this reason that their Christianity merits the name of Messianic, and could not

be, in this Jewish form, an absolute norm for all the ages." *

We may be warranted therefore in holding that the Evangelists, notably the Synoptists, exaggerated the number of Jesus's apocalyptic sayings, at any rate showed their preference for such sayings by remembering and recording them disproportionately.

The Master's use of the apocalyptic style was almost purely devotional. The Evangelist, as he introduces it, lingers on it, with an undue and curious attachment. The later New Testament writers, Paul, Peter, James, and Jude—we put John one side for the time—revert to this as their current style of telling the Master's Gospel. And the Christian Church, as it constructs its liturgy and lectionary, casts a longing look backward on its enigmatic and mysterious phrases. The Evangelists could make but one chapter of the twenty or more in their Gospels a Discourse by the Master on the Last Things.

* Sabatier, *Outlines of Philosophy and Religion*, 193, 194.

Each Synoptist makes that chapter a long one—yet it is a small proportion of his Gospel. When the Church comes to make her lectionary she appoints two of those chapters, Mark xiii and Luke xxi, covering precisely the same ground, to be read in full at the solemn Sunday morning service, besides appointing two Gospels, those for the Second Sunday in Advent and the Sixth after the Epiphany, from similar sources. This relegates some of Jesus' most characteristic and original utterances to secondary or week-day services. Such selection by the Church does not so much feed the spiritual hunger of her children as it reveals her own love for the mysterious. Better the Sermon on the Mount, the parable of the Prodigal Son, the comforting words in the Upper Chamber, twice read than this duplication of the Abomination of Desolation and the Signs in the Heavens for curious but unedified ears. A dominant note, this eschatological one, certainly even in the Master's teaching: but having its own corrective lodged in itself—a corrective our far-removed

and literal hearing is unable to apply. Jesus consecrated an apocalyptic Messianism as He consecrated the law of Moses. But He spoke a greater word of authority which should fulfil, interpret, and do away with both. He did not undermine the assumption of the disciples, but He warned them of its danger, and gave them something better to think about. "He lodged a new content, a religious and moral element, which must in the long run make them break their trammels and elevate Messianism above itself. He did it, as in every like case, not by negative criticism, but by the infusion of new life. "He never said either that it must be abandoned or that it must be retained. He deposited in it the new principle; but He left in it many obscurities, abandoning to time and to the force of things the care of drawing forth the consequences and clearing up confusions." * Christianity in all the centuries has been so

* Sabatier. *Outlines of Philosophy and Religion*, 188, 189.

inert as to still cling to the form without applying the corrective. Till we have discovered what in the Master's vision of the future still took the form of a treasured, but fantastic piety; till from the apocalyptic speech of even the Master Himself we have winnowed the temporary that we may save the permanent; we have not found the vision that is to be the hope and encouragement for all time.

There are difficulties in reconciling Jesus' utterances about the future. The key has by no means yet been found. We may busy ourselves over the details of that Discourse recorded so fully by the three Synoptists and sometimes cry out in exultation but more often in despair. Says Muirhead, "Did Jesus not merely prophesy the fall of the Jewish state, but, contrary to the spirit and manner of genuine prophecy, predict, like a soothsayer, some of the actual circumstances? Did He say that not even the Son knew the day or the hour of the consummation of the Kingdom, and yet in the same discourse declare that all sure signs of the End would fall

within that present generation? In reference to all these matters are we to see a greater or less degree of misunderstanding, or even conscious misrepresentation, on the part of the Evangelists?"* We may not allot each saying with precision—as has been the fond habit of recent exegesis—now to the destruction of Jerusalem; now to the individual soul; now to the Coming of the Son of Man and the end of the world, the end of the age and the consummation of all things. This confident, detailed handling of Scripture has ceased to win approval as it has ceased to give satisfaction. If the word be apocalyptic, mysteriousness is of its very essence. Explained and made easy, it loses whatever value it possessed.

3. We must make a more comprehensive examination of Jesus' sayings about the future than those contained in the chapters headed the Last Things. We have been caught by the phraseology and the title, and so been tempted

* Muirhead. *Eschatology of Jesus*, 10, 11.

to feel these to be His full utterance on the things that are to come to pass. So reading, we make the marks of the Future to be only suddenness and immediacy. As we read again and with wider range, we find two distinct and contrasted classes of sayings.

There are on the one hand many passages not merely in the distinctive discourse on the Last Things, but here and there throughout the Gospels, which speak of the End as immediate and sudden. But side by side with these are careful utterances of Christ where a deferred Coming is spoken of, anticipated with equal insistency, and represented as far-removed. A lengthened history is to precede it, a careful preparation to usher it in ; it cannot come till all the world of God's children has had its chance, "the Gospel must first be published among all nations:" "till the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled." Gentile to have as full a chance as Jew! What ages of longsuffering has God given the Jew! In view of such a word Paul himself, eager as he was for Christ's coming and

long confident of its immediacy, would never have consented to purchase that blessing at the price of failure of either Jew or Gentile first to hear the good news. Such parables as those of the Sower, the Wheat and the Tares, the Mustard Seed, and above all the Seed growing *gradually*—suggest a long painstaking process. A delayed Parousia is the inevitable inference from the Tares and the Wheat, the Selfish Neighbor and the Unjust Judge; from the oft-repeated prayer, Thy Kingdom come; from the slumbering virgins; and more than all from the summons “Watch” which is the one abiding key-note of Christ’s outlook on the future—whose meaning is that man be ready, always ready, whenever God speaks to him, no matter how long He may wait. This vigorous thought is splendidly embodied in the twelfth chapter of Bruce’s Kingdom of God. To Alexander Balmain Bruce, though I have not quoted him in set phrase in these lectures, I avow myself a thankful and humble debtor for much of the spirit and thought that I am trying to express therein.

Each presentation, that of the immediate and of the delayed parousia, has its value, the one as the corrective of the other. The sudden and immediate are the outer marks of the things that are to be; the delayed and the progressive belong to the inner counsels of Him who is to bring in that future. We have made the grave mistake of cherishing apocalyptic pictures apart from the conduct of men. There can be no "comings" of any moral relation to men's lives that have not been prepared for. They are to men what men's character make them to be, and character is a plant of slow growth and gradual ripening. The Coming of Christ with all its manifold accompanyings, has no value for partisan purposes apart from its value in character making. "He knew nothing of a *shall be* of the future, the vision of which was dissociated in His mind from an *ought to be* of the present." * "Neither shall they say, lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, the Kingdom of God is within

* Muirhead. Eschatology of Jesus, 108.

you."* A present and a progressive stands over against a future and a sudden; a human and a local must be ready to make a divine and eternal its own.

4. It remains for us to give an interpretation of Christ's apocalyptic language, which may put His Coming and all its attendant ideals into harmony with the rest of the Gospel. As the Coming of Christ now stands it is a unique phenomenon to be reconciled if possible, if not to be explained away. It has no part either in helping us to be good Christians or in explaining God's great gift of His Son. It is there in the Gospel and must just be reconciled or left unreconciled.

This proposed interpretation is a permissible one. Jesus Himself suggests it as a corrective to wrong deductions on the part of His disciples. The prophet Joel is so treated by St. Peter in his sermon on the Day of Pentecost; when his word "the sun shall be turned into darkness

* Luke XVII : 21.

and the moon into blood," is represented as happening on that very day of grace. And yet there stood the genial sun and the smiling moon in the heavens. "So shall the Coming of the Son of Man be."

In one word this interpretation represents these apocalyptic, eschatological phenomena as *already here*. These futures may all be found presents, and so found prove richer as spiritual lessons. The Day of the Lord is upon us; not complete, but begun, not to be, but becoming. There are to be crises, epochs, notable external events, as signs and seals that the process is on. These are like great growing days in spring and summer time; but the normal process is gradual, "first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear." The destruction of Jerusalem is just one world-crisis in which the sign of the Son of Man in the Heaven stands out more clear.

This interpretation makes Christ's Coming,

(1). A *present fact*: Christ has come, the Day of the Lord is here. The sign of the "Son of Man" has appeared. Caiaphas saw

Him coming in the heavens, when he condemned Him to the cross, and heard that the stone had been rolled away. The consummation of all things is upon us. Judgment has begun. He that is able to see it, let him see it.

(2). *A spiritual fact.* How often must He tell this to His own, in the day of His flesh, when they mistook that day as a material one! How often must He tell it to Christian hearts now, when we count and weigh religion instead of estimating it after its kind! "Spiritual" does not empty a fact of reality, of value. A "Spiritual Presence," in the Holy Communion is to the Christian a more "Real Presence" than transubstantiation and consubstantiation. The danger of other emphasis than spiritual on Christ's Coming is seen not merely in the follies of fanatics; of Adventists and Millenarians—theirs is not our danger, it is seen rather in a contempt on the part of those whom we would influence for what is regarded as necessary orthodoxy; in holding and championing positions that mean nothing vital;

in leaving the conversion of my soul and the bringing of the kingdom home to me, to a catastrophe dropping upon me from without. Man loves luck, speculation, even in religion: we will not have it, it is not good for us. A *God-send* is not a *wind-fall*.

(3). A *progressive fact*: The fact is started, is now going on, the Kingdom and its King; the converts and their principles: the judgment and its final issue. There is nothing ahead but what has already begun. Looking for something else is a mark of disloyalty and a pledge of disappointment. A fuller, a more perfect, a better realized, but not another Coming is the last word of Christian theology and Christian living. Am I not right? I appeal to you in what you really believe; rather than what you say you believe; and I ask, Does not the Resurrection take hold of the body that now is rather than of some long lost particles of dust? Does not immortality follow on from life, heaven continue what earth has begun, rather than await some phenomenal day?

(4). The consummation of the fact is *conditioned by man's response*. God does not work alone in bringing in His Kingdom. Our part ignored or forgotten, there is no kingdom for us to talk about. Providence is not fatalism. Christ's Coming is brought to fulness and made clearer and more real, as God's children are fulfilling their related duties in their place of service.

III. In passing to later books of the New Testament, we must read them all in the light of the Gospel. Whatever concession Jesus made to the current fondness for an apocalyptic style; however His outlook was conditioned by its phraseology of mystery, all this may be unhesitatingly affirmed of the writers of the Epistles. And again whatever interpretative principle illumines His utterance and makes it a permanent message for all mankind, we will gladly apply that principle to the more doubtful sayings of Paul and Peter. If the Master's future facts are also present and spiritual facts, the disciples' pictures must receive the same

clarifying touch, however bound to earth their own vision may have been. It is rarely given to a prophet to see the future in its true perspective: "Great events crowd up close behind one which in actual fulfilment are widely apart in time."

There can be no doubt that in the apostolic age there was a widely prevailing belief that the Second Coming of the Lord in visible form, was an event to be looked for in their own time. How far this was a natural deduction from our Lord's own sayings and intended by Him; and how far it was an exaggerated impression to which their own preconceptions lent themselves, is matter for curious inquiry. It is entirely reasonable to believe that this ignorance of the early Church was permitted and that with a purpose. "It stimulated spiritual zeal. It gave elasticity to apostolic institutions and ordinances." "It may seem a paradox," says Sunday, "but yet it is profoundly true, that the Church is adapted to the needs of every age, just because the original preachers of Christian-

ity never attempted to adapt it to the needs of any period but their own." * The corrective of any erroneous conclusions was to be realized by experience. The early Christianity of Apostles and their converts was to be forced back on spiritual facts and interpretations as they found the uncertainty and inadequacy of their first material outlook.

1. If we find St. Paul, as we seem to do, correcting his earlier impression about the Last Things expressed in Thessolonians by the convictions of his death-hour written to Timothy, we only see in him a process required of each Christian age. Man at first prefers what comes to him in apocalyptic fashion. That there is something better for him he will discover as these apocalypses serve their place for his childhood and leave his manhood crying out for a deeper, i. e., a more spiritual thing. Paul himself in his own deeper thought and utterance threw off this bondage and found, for the great

* Sanday Romans, 381.

experiences of the human soul, spiritual facts, to be more than physical. As Matthew Arnold says, After all, Paul's characteristic words are not election, predestination, justification, but "dying with Christ," "buried with Christ," "risen with Christ." Paul believed in death, and resurrection and life as actual, material facts, for Christ and man ; but he believed more in being dead unto sin, in being risen with Christ, in putting on life eternal.

2. Need we pause with 2nd Peter and Jude? Whatever message lies in their Epistles for man's permanent inspiration, it surely is to be separated from a great amount of traditional rabbinism such as Michael and the Devil disputing about the body of Moses, from quotations of cherished Apocalypses such as Enoch the seventh from Adam, and from phraseology running with these to a like excess of riot.

3. We reach the disciple who leaned on Jesus' bosom. The name of St. John brings us to a new position as regards the apocalyptic style.

We must ask as our first question, Did the

same hand that wrote the Fourth Gospel and the First Epistle write also the book called the Apocalypse, that is, the Revelation? To the casual reader it seems impossible, and that if we must attribute the one to St. John we must refuse to him the authorship of the others. Not even thirty years of time, nor new scenes and new requirements would make a lover of wild imagery and fantastic mysteries out of the simple, affectionate, purposeful writer of the Gospel and the Letter. Critical scholarship may disinter or even manufacture resemblances in style and language between John's Gospel and the book of Revelation, just as that same scholarship may discover differences where its eyes look out for them; but in some questions of authorship the general impression of the sympathetic reader counts for more than technical details. At any rate the composition of the books is far apart in time, and the Gospel is the later written. The final word of God's Book is not a vision of seas and vials and beasts. Nor does the threat, "If any man shall take

away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the tree of life," * refer to the Holy Bible and condemn any tampering with its text, but to the strange Apocalypse, to whose enigmatic solemnities cotemporary religion attached undue importance. There is little of Christ, though some of Paul, in the book of Revelation.

The writer had not much of real importance to say ; what he said he spoke sonorously and with an ominous voice. There is in Revelation more of vengeance than of vision. The book has received a place of undue exaltation, largely because of our still sharing the fondness for the sort of literature it exemplifies and the temper of heart it appeals to. Its value is one of texts and not of truths. Not for a moment do we deny the beauty and helpfulness of such texts for the hour of sorrow and aspiration. Its value is, as we have said, that of poetry. Much of it must be passed by unused.

* Rev. XXII: 19.

John the aged was a Seer in a deeper sense than the book of Revelation uncovers for us; it was reserved for him, ere the Canon of the New Testament was finally closed, to bring out from the treasury of his memory and from the experience of his life and love, the richer meaning of the Master.

Our references to the Gospels in this lecture have been to the Synoptic Gospels since it is there rather than in John that we find characteristic apocalyptic language. It is true that John's memory of the Discourse at the Synagogue at Capernaum thrice records the phrase "I will raise him up at the last day."* On the other hand Matthew gives us a most distinctive Johannine word. "All things have been delivered unto me of my Father: and no one knoweth the Son, save the Father; neither doth any know the Father save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son willeth to reveal him."† This

* John VI: 40, 44, 54.

† Matt. XI: 27.

does but manifest the faithfulness of their record, even when the word recorded did not fit into their plan or understanding.

John takes the external word and touches it with eternal meaning. We read in John "This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent," * and we realize that life eternal is a mark of character and not of years. We read that "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life," † and we realize that eternal life is a present gift. We read "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren," ‡ and we realize that the love of today's brother is the test of life with God. We read "the hour cometh, and *now is*, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth," § and we realize that the

* John XVII : 3.

† John III : 36.

‡ I John III : 14.

§ John IV : 23.

resurrection life and the consciousness of our Master is not something far off. Life, Death, The World, Judgment, Freedom, Eternity; Father, Son and Comforter; Tribulation, Cheer, Peace;—what a transformed meaning have they for the Christian!—transformed since Jesus spoke the words, rather since John saw what Jesus meant.

These are not apocalyptic phrases, but phrases so to speak of mysticism; it is John's Gospel that preserves for us the best in the apocalyptic thought and style; all that is worth preserving in the apocalyptic may be said to be found in the mystical. Shall we say the permanent in the apocalyptic is the mystical? Paul has helped to mediate the process. There is a tendency observable throughout the whole New Testament, as Haupt suggestively points out, for the word Eternal (*aionios*) to pass from its quantitative sense of endlessness into the qualitative idea of supra-earthly. This process attains its ripeness in John's Gospel; but "life" and "eternal" are great words with Paul as with his

Master. Even to the plain synoptist "Eternal Life" could never be the dreary dreams of his old teachers after he had heard it from the Galilean.

IV. The Mystical and the Practical.

The mystic is closely related to the apocalyptic. Christian mysticism is eschatology saved from extravagance—The word mysticism itself needs and deserves saving: a new and nobler appreciation of the value of mysticism is a growth of Christian thinking to-day. "Renewal of the study of mysticism is wholly a matter of rejoicing."

Christian mysticism has been defined as the doctrine or rather the experience of the Holy Ghost. The mystic is one who has the inner witness. The mystic sees things to the bottom.

These are splendid claims: the experience of the Holy Ghost; the witness in one's self; seeing things as they are. Historically, however, mysticism has framed for itself a far narrower definition or aim, realizing a part of the gift of the divine spirit at the expense of the whole.

Any emphasis in mysticism that sets it over against simple Christianity is such a narrowing and exclusive claim. "In proportion as mysticism either claims to be, or is regarded by ordinary Christians as being, an abnormal by-way or by-region of special experience, rather than the realization in special fulness of that which is the central inspiration and meaning of all Christian life, as well practical as contemplative; in that proportion does the mystical itself become liable to various forms of exaggeration and unhealthiness, while the Christianity which is content to remain non-mystical is impoverished at the centre of its being. All Christians profess belief in the Holy Ghost. Had only all Christians understood, and lived up to, their belief, they would all have been mystics: or in other words there would have been no mysticism." * Wherever mysticism is set up as separate from simple Christianity, or a separate department of Christian profession, we must be recalled from

* Moberly. *Atonement and Personality*, 315, 316.

John's meditative Gospel to Mark's Deeds and Matthew's Words of the Master. Christ's full figure includes both the practical and the mystical. In Him the inward life makes itself manifest in character; the interest in the world's life touches the soul to its deepest thought. "It is as truly contemplation as activity, and activity as contemplation."

The speculative mysticism of the disciple, apart from the practical purpose of the Master, tends to issue in dreams unrelated to life. That is what we are tempted to fall into in some of our special services, those which have no recognized provision in the Prayer Book. Such are the Three hours Meditations on The Seven Words from the Cross, repeated Good Friday after Good Friday. The first observance of such a service may carry us into the inner sanctuary of the mystic. But these were hardly the only words Christ spoke from His Cross, nor do they exhaust what the three hours may teach. Repeated and prolonged "meditation" on those exact sayings loses the life from the Cross, misses the spirit through a mystic reverence for the letter.

While the mystic is the apocalypticist purified and modified, yet the final standing place for the Christian will not rest even with the mystic—he must express himself, teach his lesson, and pass on. The book of Revelation, even at its best; its golden streets; its tears wiped away; its new name written; its absence of a temple; its worship, that rests not day and night; the ascription of its fifth chapter “Blessing and honor and glory and power;” and the picture of the twenty-second which sometimes seems to us to strike the loftiest note possible for human utterance—even these are not for all people and for all time the note of their complete harmony. To hymns of experience must succeed hymns of action, and the best hymn blends both in its melody. There will be a better thing in the hereafter than the ceaseless worship with the redeemed; and that will be, perhaps—but we are using the words of another mystic—preaching unto the spirits in prison with the Crucified. The test of even the mystic’s truth must be, Does it find me, my whole self?

We have already in our Christian age, at least so far as it produces any real effect upon our lives, passed beyond the apocalyptic. We shall in due time also pass beyond the mystic, a more spiritual but not a final survival. We must first find its treasure ; we must hold on to the mystical, till the man of action has become the man of sympathy, the man who does has also become the man who sees ; and that is not till Christ, both the Captain of our Salvation and the Seer of our vision, both King and Prophet, has been born in each one of us.

Christianity has in itself a progressive power to escape out of the bonds of the temporary however confining. For the one pervasive Christian note, caught from the Master's own word, never dimmed by apparent failure, is confidence in the ultimate victory. That triumphant note will eliminate all, as it has already thrown aside many, marks of temporariness. For a little day we read the message as outward, behold ! the message is found to be a message of Christ, and His full word never stops short of

the inward. In the progressive conquest of final truth it is ever the outward that must recede and the inward that will survive ; for the inward is the man, and to the man all these things belong, and man is Christ's and Christ is God's.

The following quotation from Dr. Hatch, substituting the word mystic for the word allegorical, forms a fitting appendix to this lecture. " It (the Mystical) survives because it is based upon an element of human nature which is not likely to pass away : whatever be its value in relation to the literature of the past, it is at least the expression in relation to the present that our lives are hedged around by the unknown, that there is a haze about both our birth and our departure, and that even the meaner facts of life are linked to infinity, but two modern beliefs militate against it. One is that the thoughts of the past are relative to the past and must be interpreted by it. A written word is no more than a spoken word ; a spoken word is taken in the sense in which the speaker used it at the time at which he used it. The idea that ancient literature consists of riddles

which it is the business of modern literature to solve has passed forever away. The other belief is that the Spirit of God has not yet ceased to speak to man and it is important for us to know not only what He told the men of other days, but also what He tells them now. We can believe that there is a divine voice, but we find it hard to believe that it has died away to an echo from the Judean hills." *

* Hatch. *Influence of Greek Ideas*, 83, 84.

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